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Christian Courier

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Crusader for the poor honors memory of Olaf Solheim

JANE OUWEHAND

A portrait of Olaf Solheim painted on one side of the old Woodward's building in downtown Vancouver.

Jane Ouwehand

VANCOUVER — A field of beautiful painted red and white flowers with the caption "Children First" graces one of the picture windows of the old Woodward's building in downtown Vancouver. A larger than life portrait of a bearded old man and the words "Remember Olaf Solheim" fill another window. A third window has the slogan "People Before Profits." Landscapes and abstracts painted in vivid green, red, yellow and blue fill all the windows along Abott and several on Hastings as well.

Fama Holdings Ltd. has bought the building and is applying for a permit to build upscale condominiums.

Poverty activist Bud Osborn would like to see the building used to house the poor and provide space for a grocery store, daycare centre, medical clinic and/or a centre for help for drug and alcohol abusers. Local artists, inspired by Osborn's intentions, provided the window paintings.

Who is the bearded man, Olaf Solheim, pictured in one of the windows of the Woodward building? He was a man of Norwegian descent who lived for 62 years in a downtown hotel but who was evicted to make room for tourists when Expo came to Vancouver in 1986. He died two weeks after being displaced, at the age of 88. Olaf Solheim has since become a symbol of the cost of development.

Remember the least

In an open letter in the *Christian Info News* Osborn calls upon Christians to note that "revitalization" projects in similar areas of Toronto and New York have displaced the poor and made their lot more difficult. He asks Christians to remember when they have been among "the least of these" and to "respond to the downtown Eastside community of the poor, which is asking the city of Vancouver: 'Why are you forsaking us?'"

Osborn is no stranger to the Eastside. He began to live there nine years ago, before he was a Christian. He has also lived in the poor areas of Toledo, Ohio, New York and Toronto. Osborn knows from experience the problems of drug and alcohol addiction. He knows what it is to be the victim of abuse.

See **VANCOUVER** *page 2...*

YMCA reconsiders its Christian identity

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO — In Canada and other countries, the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) is re-evaluating its mission, and considering whether to affirm or distance itself from its Christian roots.

The World Alliance of YMCAs, whose main office is in Geneva, Switzerland, is currently involved in a mission review process leading up to its next "World Council" meeting in 1998. The alliance is also encouraging its member organizations in 120 countries to evaluate their missions.

"Eventually we will reach a consensus on a worldwide mission statement that will be reflective of our broad diversity," explains John Casey, the alliance's secretary general.

YMCAs in each country are independent organizations, and often have very different identities, depending on their cultural context. "Some movements remain very evangelical in their Christian perspective and others compromise language for action," states Casey. "I am not aware of any YMCA in the world that is considering dropping the 'C' from the name nor am I aware of any that are trying to distance themselves from the Christian roots.... Participation in the YMCA, in all parts of the world, is of the broadest possible diversity reflecting the diversity, interests and needs of the community. We are not a religion or a church but our Christian motivation is to assist people in the development of their body, minds and spirit as well as the development of the community itself."

But Ulrich Parzany, general secretary of Germany's YMCA,

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News

Vancouver poor have strong sense of community

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But now Osborn knows the love of God in his life. He has become a member of the Holy Rosary Cathedral. He speaks of how we see Christ in those who are poor, and how the poor have a contribution to make.

"The sense of community is unique here: it is very real," says Osborn. "There are some strong community organizations. Community centres like the Carnegie Community Centre are a focal point. You get to know people here. They tell one another where to find free food, housing, and to cash in bottles. It is a shared poverty. Poverty is a thousand times worse when it is not shared." He mentions how the sense of community is unique to Vancouver: in other cities he has lived in it was every person for himself.

JANE OUWEHAND

Many of the poor in the downtown east side literally live on the streets. They know how to recycle.

Trouble area

Osborn is very aware of how vulnerable the poor are, and other people share this concern. A worker from Crabtree Corner which provides daycare says that 200 single mothers have moved to the area lately, and many are living in accommodations unsuitable for children, such as local hotels.

City coroner Larry Campbell has noted an increase in deaths here in the past year and has talked about stress being part of the reason.

Native leader Fred Aarons says the Eastside is the "largest urban Native reserve in Canada," and he speaks of the large number of women who have been murdered lately, especially prostitutes and drug addicts. It is said that there are six serial killers at work in this area. In any other area of the city there would be outrage if so many women were killed.

Since the provincial government decided last November not to give welfare to immigrants and people from other provinces until they have lived in B.C. for three months, the number of homeless is expected to increase.

Osborn describes a recent meeting he had with Mayor Philip Owen and the developer who has bought the Woodwards building. It did not go well for Osborn. A "mixed housing component" was what was discussed: the top two floors for the upscale market, the next two floors for those of middle income, and the rest for retail and housing for the poor.

Lots of money needed

Supporters have come forward as a result of Osborn's letter in *Christian Info News*: a few wealthy Christians, CEOs and philanthropists have come to meetings to start a drive to raise enough money to buy the building from the developer.

Regent College, St. Augustine's Church in Kitsilano and St. John's Anglican Church in Shaugnessy are among those who have invited Osborn to speak: what comes out of these meetings may be letters of support to city council, or increased personal involvement in helping those who are poor in the downtown Eastside.

Ron and Vera Ward, who head the revival centre kitty-corner to Woodward's, have prayed much that the city council will remember the poor in their decision.

Strictly speaking, nobody will be displaced when the Woodward's building is developed. It is standing empty now. But Osborn knows "it would take kind of a loud voice, or a lot of money" to bring about what he would like to see. His vision of the Woodward's building being used to strengthen and protect the downtown Eastside community seems to be in direct conflict with the vision of the developer who owns the building.

YMCA keeps Christian values in programs

...continued from page 1

says that some people within that organization regard the profession of Christ as "a hindrance to a peaceful and productive co-existence of people of varying faiths," reports a German news service.

Parzany himself believes the proclamation of Christ is indispensable to the YMCA. "Our identity as YMCA consists in our acknowledging Jesus Christ as God and Savior, according to the Holy Scripture," he says. Parzany has vowed to do what he can to see that this position is reaffirmed at the YMCA world council meeting in 1998.

To be disciples

The YMCA world alliance's motto is "That they all may be one," which is taken from John 17:21. Its mission is reflected in the Paris Basis of 1855, which has remained unchanged until today. It states: "The YMCAs seek to unite those young men who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Savior, according to the Holy Scripture, desire to be His disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of His Kingdom amongst young men. Any differences of opinion on other subjects, however important in themselves, shall not interfere in the harmonious relations of the constituent members and associates of the world alliance."

The YMCA began in 1844 when a British clerk named George Williams opened a centre in London for young men from the country-side to read the Bible, relax and look for lodging. The YMCA is now a worldwide organization with about 30 million members in 120 countries.

Inclusive organization

In Canada, as elsewhere, the YMCA has a reverse hierarchy, with each local community YMCA having the most power, explains Sol Kasimer, the chief executive officer of YMCA Canada. Despite the reference to "young men" in its name, the YMCA is "open to all ages and both sexes," says Kasimer. Inclusiveness is a key value for YMCA Canada.

COURTESY YMCA

YMCAs have many summer camps and youth programs which allow youth leaders to develop leadership skills

Janet Sutherland, director of international programs for YMCA Canada, says that some national YMCAs have very different missions and mission statements. "China's is particularly unique," she says. Although Christian activity is very restricted by China's Communist government, China's YMCA has "been given more room to move in" than other Christian groups, and is overtly Christian. In China, "the YMCA was never oppressed except in the Cultural Revolution," explains Sutherland. One reason for this is that Communists have been directly involved in the YMCA in the past, she suggests.

Focus on facilities

YMCAs in North America tend to have "a very facility-based outreach." But the YMCA's Christian values are reflected in some of its social programs. For instance, about one-third of Canada's 65 local YMCAs are involved in immigrant settlement, says Sutherland. This includes sponsorship of refugees, housing, counselling and English as a Second Language programs for immigrants.

The YMCA also works with "marginal people," states Sutherland. "The roots of that come from the Christian orientation to love your neighbor and help the poor."

Today, most people refer to the YMCA by its initials. "Not everyone's going to know what those initials mean," admits Sutherland. But she adds, "I think there's a strong loyalty to the roots of the organization." The YMCA's Christian origin is "one of the things that makes the YMCA different."

Politics/News

Who is the government?

POLITICS

David Koyzis

As I write, the U.S. government has just gone back into business after three weeks of a partial shutdown Much of the government still functioned during this time: soldiers continued to guard their posts, the FBI continued to investigate federal crimes, and the CIA continued to gather foreign intelligence. But so-called "nonessential services" were suspended, and millions of civil servants employed in a variety of departments and agencies were given an unexpected holiday.

This was the latest episode in a confrontation between President Clinton and the Republican-dominated Congress over the budget — a confrontation that has skirted the boundaries between high drama and farce. Such shutdowns had occurred before for brief periods, but this one broke all records for its length and the sheer level of animosity between the contesting parties.

Deliberately fragmented power

Such a budget standoff would be inconceivable here in Canada, where it would certainly lead to the fall of a government. But in the U.S., the President need not enjoy the confidence of the Congress to remain in office. In fact, over the past generation the presidency and the Congress have usually been controlled by opposing parties, such that co-operation between the two often seems the exception rather than the rule. Accordingly, Americans are wont to speak of the "Clinton *administration*" rather than the "Clinton *government*," because it is difficult to speak of any one person or group governing in any readily perceptible sense.

Two centuries ago the American founders deliberately sought to fragment power to prevent it from concentrating in the hands of a potential tyrant. The United States Constitution is famous for its "checks and balances" which were carefully crafted to maintain a delicate equilibrium among the President, the Senate, the House of Representatives and the Supreme Court. Because each of these institutions possesses powers over all the others, it is impossible to speak of any one of them holding ultimate sovereignty within the system.

This is both good and bad. On the one hand, it prevented an "imperial" president from getting away with underhanded activities intended to sabotage an election campaign nearly a quarter of a century ago. Richard Nixon's claims of executive privilege were successfully deflated by a Congress and a Supreme Court unwilling to allow him to hide behind the mantle of public office.

Stronger parties needed

On the other hand, this deliberate fragmentation of power also means that it is virtually impossible to hold anyone responsible for controversial policy initiatives or even for a lack of coherent policy. You can be sure that this year's campaign will see a lot of finger-pointing as Congress and President blame each other for their inability to accomplish their respective agendas. And the system allows them to do this.

Given this state of affairs, it is not surprising that Americans might look for someone to rescue them from this morass. Many thought they had found such a person in General Colin Powell, whose decision not to enter the presidential race disappointed them. But rather than seeking a napoleonic figure to cut through governmental gridlock, Americans would do better to consider basic reforms that would strengthen their political parties and encourage the formation of new parties. This would increase the accountability of their officials and encourage them to co-operate more effectively for policy purposes.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont.

St. Catharines YMCA values its roots

Alan Doerksen

As YMCAs around the world reflect on their identity, leaders of the St. Catharines, Ont. YMCA have decided to stay close to the organization's Christian roots.

"We're not going to deny or forget where we came from," says Franco Savoia, the chief executive officer of the St. Catharines YMCA. Last year the St. Catharines YMCA re-evaluated its mission and decided to remain Christian in its outlook. There was discussion about removing the "C" from YMCA, but "there was a strong feeling here to say, 'No darn way,'" says Savioa.

"I have found the YMCA a very Christian place to work," says Savioa, a Catholic who originally planned to become a priest. He has been on staff with the YMCA at the local and national level for 25 years.

Importance of spirit

Like many YMCAs, Savoia's places an emphasis on developing the body, mind and spirit of each of its members. For Savoia, there was a question of "How do we deal with the spirit?" The answer was to build an interdenominational chapel at the local YMCA.

"In general, it's been well-received," says Savoia. There is a chapel committee at the YMCA, a weekly men's prayer group and a weekly Bible study for children aged eight to 10 called the "Spirit group." The chapel is an expression of the local community, says Savoia.

"The spiritual part of us is very important," says Savioa. "Increasingly, we're going to have to come to terms with that.... You can't deny the fact that you have a spirit."

"We stay away from dogma," he explains. "We have an overriding value which is inclusivity."

Church and state

Savoia has seen that YMCAs in other countries have different ways of expressing their spiritual identity. In countries where Christians are a minority, the YMCA's Christian mission is more explicit, says Savoia. In Latin America, which is mostly Roman Catholic, members of YMCA boards used to have to be practising Protestants, he notes.

"We in North America have evolved somewhat differently, with separation of church and state," says Savoia.

ALAN DOERKSEN

Franco Savoia at the door of the YMCA's chapel.

Generally, people think of the YMCA by its initials, not by its full name, says Savoia. "The predominant feeling is that it's a gym and swim." He acknowledges that the YMCA's identity has changed over the years. "Fifty per cent of our participants are women. We really are a family organization now."

Childcare is now the largest program of the St. Catharines YMCA. It works with many not-for-profit groups, including Youth For Christ. The vision statement of the St. Catharines YMCA is: "building healthy people in a healthy community."

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Editorial

Cynical young people are a judgment on my generation

On a CBC television documentary, a young Canadian activist was interviewed about her involvement in politics and foodbanks. She talked about her own generation and how incredibly cynical her peers are. She commented on how the youth of the '60s protested loudly against war and corporate power but eventually joined the establishment and ended up with big houses and swimming pools. "My generation, seeing what happened to an earlier one, has decided to forget about the protests and skip right on to the pools," she said.

Her remarks fit in with a survey done by an Ottawa market-research firm which reports that males aged 18 to 24 are twice as likely to cheat on their taxes as the average Canadian. According to these young men, only fools pay taxes. That's an economic expression of cynicism.

The young activist interviewed on CBC had chosen a different route from that chosen by her cynical peers. She was there when a rowdy group protested the Harris cutbacks in front of Queen's Park last fall. She even had a few teeth knocked out by a policeman's elbow. I admired the spunk of the young woman, even though I did not agree with her assessment of who was to blame for the violence that ensued after protesters stormed the barricades.

Life was simpler

The young activist's comments reminded me of a discussion I recently had with a campus chaplain about the cynicism he experienced among young Christian Reformed intellectuals. He explained how the group he met with was very down on the church. After talking with him they had tried going to church again back home but had found the experience frustrating and deadening.

The chaplain and I talked a little about how he and I had grown up in "easier times." Of course, the war years and years of immigration had been difficult for us in a physical and emotional sense, but spiritually they had been stimulating. Things were simpler in the '40s and '50s. We knew exactly who the enemy was and what was expected of us. We didn't rebel against our parents. We had no need to. We were all involved in a struggle for survival.

We grew up in a time of certainty and commitment as far as the faith was concerned. Science had not brought us face to face with "edge-of-life" questions, and technology had not overwhelmed us with all kinds of time-consuming gadgets. After the setbacks of war and immigration, we entered a time of economic growth and opportunity.

Youth needs ideals

Compared with us older Christians, young persons today have a much more difficult time coming to grips with their times. It's hard for them to become enthusiastic about life and feel that they have a sense of calling and purpose. Their parents are so well-established that they are not always able to inspire or challenge their children effectively. And church life easily degenerates into a pre-occupation with the status quo: keeping buildings warm or air-conditioned; taking a position on "women in office" (which by now has resulted in frozen positions); trying to meet the budget.

No wonder young people have become cynical. Being young should mean entering a time of idealism. That idealism is often unrealistic, to be sure, but it is, nevertheless, essential for growing up. A cynical young generation spells the death of a nation and of a church.

For their own sakes and for the sake of the church, I wish young people would challenge the church more.

But I'm afraid that many young people are looking for the easy way out: they either go through the motions, stay away or look for a church where they feel more "at home." In a spiritual sense, they're forgetting about the protests and skipping over to the pools.

Stepping out with little faith

I heard a good sermon last week about stepping out of the boat. The preacher, a woman in her third year of seminary training at Calvin Seminary, preached on how Peter wanted to join Jesus in his walk on the wild waters of the Sea of Galilee. Instead of focusing on Peter's doubts and fear once he was walking on the water, the preacher focused on Peter's willingness to act on his faith by stepping out of the boat. In a word play on the current term describing passive spectators, she said the other disciples who stayed in the boat were really "boat potatoes." The message was quite clear: you can't play it safe in the Kingdom of Heaven. You have to act on your faith with the possibility of failing.

When churches become "safe" places where the comfortable are pampered instead of afflicted, and the afflicted neglected instead of comforted, we have reason to protest.

In the days of my young people's society time, we used to sing with gusto: "How shall the young direct their way?/ What light shall be their perfect guide?" The answer came in the following lines: "Thy Word, O Lord, will safely lead,/ If in its wisdom they confide."

That answer still stands, of course. But it hinges on the word "if." And that "if" is the responsibility of the whole Christian community, I think. Why should young people confide in the wisdom of God's Word, *if* the previous generation no longer meditates on God's law with awe and then acts on it? It seems to me that my generation is partly responsible for the cynicism of Generation X. **BW**

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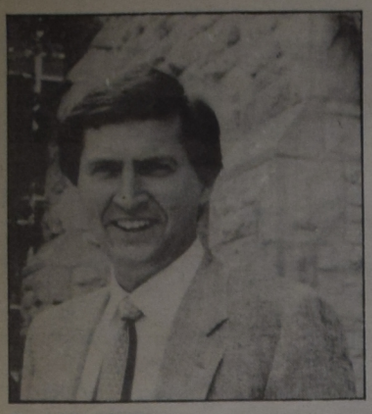
Are you a cynic?

Test yourself against the following explanation of the word "cynic." Cynicism comes from the Greek word for "dog-like" (kynikos), and refers to a surly or snarling disposition or attitude. It can be applied to people when they disbelieve in a given system or moral order. Cynical people often resort to sarcasm as a way of hiding their disappointment in life. The proverbial cynic was philosopher Diogenes of Sinope, who lived in a barrel and acted like a dog, criticising his contemporaries with biting ridicule. The Cynics taught that a person should lead a life of self-control and be free from all desire for material things and pleasures. According to legend, Alexander the Great once visited Diogenes lying in front of his barrel and asked him if he could do Diogenes a favor. Diogenes' answer was, "Yeah, get out of my sunlight." **BW**

Opinion

The West remains silent on persecution of Christians in the Arab world



Paul Marshall

During the recent holiday season, the withdrawal of Israeli security forces allowed Palestinian Christians to plan unprecedented celebrations at Christmas' very point of origin, Bethlehem. In Bethlehem and throughout the Holy Land, the church has continued since the time of Christ. Ironically, however, Christians in the Middle East and North Africa are among the most persecuted people in the world.

The situation for Christians varies from relative openness in Lebanon and Jordan to absolute restriction in Saudi Arabia and genocide in Sudan. But Christians in this region hold one thing in common: they are almost completely ignored in the West — even by Western churches.

Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States prohibit any open practice of Christianity. In Arab countries where Christianity is allowed, traditional churches are controlled by governments, and church buildings and businesses are frequently destroyed. Christians suffer discrimination in employment and education, are restricted in travel, pay additional taxes and have inferior status in the courts.

Suffering or death for their faith

In Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Sudan, the law specifies the death penalty for anyone who converts from Islam. In Egypt, new Christian converts from Islam are imprisoned and often tortured. Throughout the area, Christians can be forcibly divorced, and their children can be taken to be raised by Islamic relatives. Many Christians remain under death threats by militant Islamists.

The United Nations defines genocide as attempting to destroy a group by killing its members, causing serious bodily harm, subjecting it to conditions which will cause its physical destruction, preventing births and forcibly transferring children.

Certainly, this is a description of southern Sudan, where the National Islamic Front government is waging civil war with the predominantly Christian population of the south.

In Sudan, Christian men and women are forcibly separated. Children are seized to be raised as Muslims or sold in slave markets. Tens of thousands of refugees are dumped in open desert and systematically denied food, water and medicine. There are repeated massacres and reports that Christians have literally been crucified.

Christianity there before Islam

Tragically, such hideous oppression is all but ignored in the West. There are several reasons for this.

One is a misconception that "Arab" equals "Muslim." In fact, most Muslims live outside of the Arab world. Egypt, the largest Arab country, has only the eighth largest Muslim population in the world, far behind Indonesia and Pakistan, and even India and China.

The Arab world actually contains people of many religions, and Christians have significant communities in many nations. Lebanon is 40 per cent Christian; Sudan is about 20 per cent Christian, and Egypt is about 12 per cent.

Other countries have lower proportions only because of a recent emigration wave by Christians which was largely prompted by the persecution. At the turn of the century, Turkey was about 30 per cent Christian, while Syria was 40 per cent.

The Arab world is the heartland of Christianity, yet there is a vague sense among secular people and "multiculturalists" that Christians are somehow "intruding" in a properly Muslim area. However, the entire area was Christian long before the arrival of Islam.

Christ was born in Bethlehem, but the early church quickly spread across the region. Tradition holds that Christianity was introduced to Egypt by St. Mark in 42 A.D. Alexandria was one of Christianity's intellectual centres and the home of major church fathers such as Athanasius, Clement and Cyril. Turkey was the site of most of the Apostle Paul's ministry.

Christians in the Arab world are also ignored for political reasons. Western political support for Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states — largely because of their oil wealth — has led to a conspiracy of silence about the repression of religious minorities.

Politics and theology aid persecution

Sometimes Western governments go beyond silence to active complicity. In the Gulf War, they acceded to Saudi demands and forbade Christian and Jewish troops to practice their religion while on Saudi soil. Some reports claimed that Christian Iraqi prisoners of war were beaten by the Saudis to get them to renounce their faith.

Sadly, theological reasons may also add to the neglect. Especially in the United States, many evangelical Christians adhere to the belief that according to biblical prophecy, those who oppose Israel oppose God. Hence Arabs, including Christian Arabs, are indiscriminately cast as God's opponents.

Western ignorance, silence and tacit support for oppression must be exposed. Christians need to call on their governments to take action against religious repression. But Western Christians first need to look at their own responsibility. Why do they stand silently by while their sisters and brothers in the faith are consigned to suffering and death?

Paul Marshall is senior member in political theory at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, and is the academic advisor to the World Evangelical Fellowship's Commission on Religious Freedom.

An atheist soldier finds God

C.C. FILES

The following is a translation of a remarkable poem found some years ago on a young Russian soldier killed in action in Afghanistan. His name was Alexander Zatsepa.

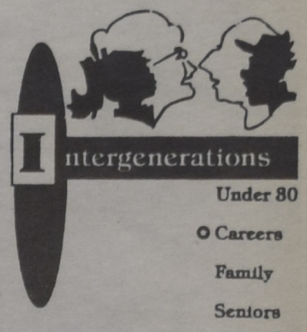
Hear me, O God; never in the
whole of my lifetime have I
spoken to you.
But just now I feel like sending
you my greetings.
You know from childhood on
they've always told me you are
not.
I, like a fool, believed them.
I've never contemplated your
creation. And yet, tonight, gazing
up out of my foxhole, I
marvelled at the shimmering stars
above me and suddenly knew the
cruelty of the lie.
Will you, my God, reach your
hand out to me, I wonder?
But I will tell you, and you
will understand.
Is it not strange that light should
come upon me
and I see you amid this night of
hell?
And there is nothing else I have
to say.
This, though: I'm glad that I have
learned to know you.
At midnight we are scheduled
to attack.
But you are looking on, and I am
not afraid.
The signal...: well, I guess
I must be going.
I have been happy with you.
This more I want to say:
As you will know, the fighting
will be cruel,
And even tonight I may come
knocking at your door,
Although I have not been a friend
to you before.
Still, will you let me enter now,
when I do come?
Why, I am crying! O God, my Lord,
You see what happens to me.
Tonight my eyes were opened.
Farewell, my God. I'm going and
not likely to come back.
Strange, is it not? But death I fear
no longer.

Submitted by Warmolt Houwing of Toronto.

Society

On the job with a 'real time' software engineer

Does being a Christian make a difference?



Nandy Heule

Matthew Bastian's work at the National Research Council of Canada brings us to the cutting edge of what is supposed to sustain Canada's economy — high-tech jobs.

Although trained as a mechanical engineer, Matthew doesn't oversee the building of bridges or highways. Instead, his computer software programs help researchers study airborne pollution, boreal forests, weather patterns and so on. It's probably not what mechanical engineers did 50 years ago. But it's the type of work that builds the infrastructure of a "knowledge-based" economy, says the Research Council.

Matthew and his family are active at Calvary Christian Reformed Church, Ottawa, and the local Christian day school. His children, ages 8, 5, 4, and 3, miss Dad — and Matthew misses his family — when he's on extended field trips. Read on.

Name: *Matthew Bastian*
Age: *Thirty-something*
Company: *The Institute of Aerospace Research at the National Research Council of Canada*
Job: *Software engineer/computer specialist*
Location: *Ottawa, Ontario.*

How did you get to be a computer specialist at the aerospace institute?

I earned a mechanical engineering degree at McGill University, Montreal, and stuck around for another half year to complete extra computer science courses.

I then applied to a job at the Research Council, a federally funded agency, but didn't get it.

C.C. FILES

A crop duster plane, used to spray farm crops with liquid plant food or insecticide

However, I had a very strong feeling that it would only be a matter of time for me to work there. And indeed, two years later, out of the blue, an assistant laboratory head called me, asking me to apply for another opening at the council. I applied and got the job. My wife and I were able to sell our house in Montreal and move to Ottawa. We both felt the entire experience was somewhat unreal; it was the Lord's doing, not ours.

On the first day of work, an aging public servant told me, "Welcome to your retirement home." In other words, once you're hired by the government you have a job for life. Things have changed. Funding cuts might very well slash our budget at the aerospace institute.

What is your typical day like?

My work is very varied and that's what I like about it. There's really no "typical day." Twice I have been to Nova Scotia to study air pollution that has greatly damaged the east coasts of Canada and the United States, as well as the Ohio Valley. It's an eye-opener to be sitting in a cockpit to see the amount and extent of pollution. At times, the pollution sits airborne in layers about a metre thick and yellowish-brown in color.

In general, I work with a researcher who wants to collect data for which (s)he needs an airplane. For example, a PhD in agriculture who works for the Department of Agriculture might ask us to help him collect data on farm spraying and its effect on air quality. Say, he wants to put a number of measuring instruments on a plane to collect his data. It's my job to get a feel for the nature of the research, the types of instruments needed and the methods needed to collect the data. Together with a technician, I work out a plan of action. I've learned a lot about flying — what's safe and what's not.

As the airplane flies along, its on-board computer needs to read, sense and store data on things like accelerations, outside air velocity, dew point, ozone and carbon dioxide concentrations (greenhouse gasses) and so on. What makes this kind of computing unique is that everything has to happen in what's called "real time." In our case, the above calculations are done 32 times a second (!) — data acquisition, calculation and computer storage is done almost simultaneously. The agriculture researchers would probably ask us to collect data on airborne chemical particles associated with farm spraying.

In your work, does it make a difference that you're a Christian?

My colleagues and I all have our own philosophies that motivate us to do this work. Personally, I feel that the work I do has meaning beyond 9 to 5. It's not immediately benefitting the public at large — in fact, it often takes as much as 10 years to see the cycle of data collection, theorizing and application come to a close. However, in the end, our work has direct implications for the scientific community, and possibly, public policy.

Most importantly, I feel that this type of work helps us to better understand God's creation. I feel very strongly that we have to take care of this world. Unfortunately, budget cuts hit hardest the areas of research that don't offer commercial benefits. For example, environmental research generally doesn't generate revenue, so it gets cut first even if the projects make good sense for the public good.

Anything you particularly like or dislike?

I very much enjoy my work. I've done jobs where I sat behind a computer screen all day, and I found this difficult. I also enjoy field trips to different corners of Canada I would normally not visit.

"Most importantly, I feel that this type of work helps us to better understand God's creation. I feel very strongly that we have to take care of this world."

But, it's hard at times to be part of the bureaucratic "system." I have to work on my own initiative, take on extra projects and so on. There's not a whole lot of accountability.

Any suggestions for those looking for a career in engineering?

My combination of mechanical engineering and computer science has served me well. At the moment it's a rather unusual combination.

Nandy Heule is a writer and publisher in Brampton, Ont., who tries to build bridges between generations through the publication of life stories. The opinions in this column are those of the person featured and do not necessarily reflect average working conditions. Contact Nandy at (905)451-8916 if you know of a (retired) judge, justice of the peace, or court reporter who could be interviewed for this column.

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Media/Arts

Film review

Sabrina remake maintains old-fashioned romance

Marian Van Til

Sabrina

Rated PG
Stars Julia Ormond, Harrison Ford, Greg Kinnear, Nancy Marchand
Written by Barbara Benedek and David Rayfiel
Directed by Sidney Pollack

C.C. FILES

Julia Ormond as Sabrina

Sabrina is a remake of the 1954 film by the same name. When a film you're remaking starred the likes of Humphrey Bogart, Audrey Hepburn and William Holden and was directed by Billy Wilder, you truly do have a tough act to follow. Looking at director Sidney Pollack's film credits — works like *Three Days of the Condor, Absence of Malice, Out of Africa, The Firm* — wouldn't lead one to believe that he'd be the person to pull off a fluffy romantic comedy, much less one based on a classic. But undaunted by the status of the original film and its actors, Pollack forges ahead with confidence. And well he might have confidence in this exceptional cast. He and they construct a magical film.

Sabrina Fairchild (British actress Julia Ormond) is a chauffeur's daughter. The chauffeur, a British native, has for years worked for a fabulously wealthy corporate family, the Larrabees, who live in a spectacular estate on Long Island. The senior Larrabee died some years earlier, and his widow and Linus, the eldest son (Harrison Ford), run the corporation while the younger son/brother, David (Greg Kinnear), frolics off the proceeds.

Ugly duckling transformed

Thus, Sabrina grows up on the grounds of the estate (the lodgings for the chauffeur and his family come with the job). A gawky, shy girl, she spends her childhood watching Larrabee affairs from afar, and vicariously enjoys the legendary Larrabee outdoor parties (which she scopes out from a treetop). In the meantime, she develops a serious crush on David Larrabee.

Sabrina appears to think she's an ugly duckling and he's a knight in shining armor. As a teenager she dreams of being swept away by him; in one's fantasies, anything is possible.

So when her father insists she go to Paris to meet and work with a distant relative, and to discover the world, she agrees only reluctantly. Once she is there a while, however, she realizes her father's wisdom, and knows he sent her there to get to know herself as well.

By the time the "ugly duckling" returns to New York her new-found self-confidence (and Paris fashions and coiffure) have turned her into a beautiful swan. Though the habitually foot-loose David Larrabee becomes engaged to a doctor from an appropriate family while Sabrina is away, predictably, David is instantly enchanted by this new yet familiar creature he has previously ignored.

From there, the story and relationships gets complicated and the ever-serious workaholic Linus provides a counterpoint for the plot. Unless you've seen the original or have a sixth sense for how such stories turn out, the ending will be a surprise.

The screenwriters and Pollack stick fairly closely to the original story, though its setting in the present changes certain details and attitudes. The plot is, of course, totally unrealistic. The girl is not only *nice*: she turns out to be beautiful, she gets the right guy, and she ends up ridiculously rich, both on her astute father's account and on account of her future husband. This is the fairy-tale Cinderella marrying the crown prince; and they live happily ever after.

No serious thoughts

As wittily written, well-acted, sophisticated romantic fantasy this is an extremely enjoyable movie. It's a confection that goes down with humor and not too much sugar. However, if you take it more seriously you may be reminded of Christ's admonitions about the love of money; and you may end up depressed.

Glamorous though such a lifestyle seems, its hard not to think of the insulating and, too often, adulterating influence of such enormous wealth — the character of Linus being a good example. At the same time, this picture of high society glamor is quite seductive.

If this story has an insidious undercurrent it is that it "buys into" the lifestyles-of-the-rich-and-famous routine. It doesn't take seriously the potential for money, and for 21st century corporate power, to corrupt.

Former Toronto Vineyard to air radio program

TORONTO (TACF) — The Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship (TACF), home of the "Toronto Blessing," will air a renewal radio program beginning Jan. 22. The program is intended to "multiply God's blessing," which many across the world have experienced by visiting the TACF, via the airwaves.

The 15-minute talk show, to be called by TACF's trademark name "Catch The Fire," will feature testimonies, interviews and discussions interspersed with renewal news and announcements of upcoming events. Listeners will be given audio images designed to evoke the experience of being in a TACF renewal meeting. On-location taping will include background sounds such as crowd noise, live worship and even laughter.

Member of the TACF pastoral staff will host the program. Producing the program are Marnie Blom, a former TV producer for "100 Huntley Street," and Penny Spence, TV producer with David C. Cook's Kids Everywhere Productions.

TV show coming too

"Catch The Fire" radio will air on WHLD, 1270 AM, Grand Island, N.Y., at 9:15 a.m., and in Oakville, Ont., on CJMR, 1320 AM, at 12;15 p.m.

The program is available for syndication internationally and will be featured by TACF at the National Religious Broadcasters' convention in Indianapolis, Feb. 3-6. It will be launched at TACFs 2nd Anniversary Celebration on Jan. 20, which marks the day the outpouring of God's Blessing began.

TACF has also begun producing a weekly, half-hour renewal TV program. Air dates are still tentative, but producer Marian Rice-Oxley says it will be available on Canada's Vision channel by the beginning of March.

Calvin Klein investigation complete

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP) — The U.S. Justice Department ended its investigation into Calvin Klein's controversial advertising campaign for jeans without bringing charges. The ads, which featured young models in provocative poses, did not violate federal child pornography laws, the department concluded.

Deputy Assistant Attorney General Kevin DiGregory said the Justice Department's child exploitation unit verified that, contrary to appearances and earlier reports, minors were not used as models in the controversial photographs.

Klein cancelled the campaign after Christian conservatives and child welfare advocates alike criticized it, but just a few months later released a new underwear ad showing a young man in underwear whose legs are spread wide to show off his genital area.

The Rev. Donald Wildmon, founder of the American Family Association, called the ad "nothing but pornography" and said he would urge consumers to boycott Klein products.

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Church

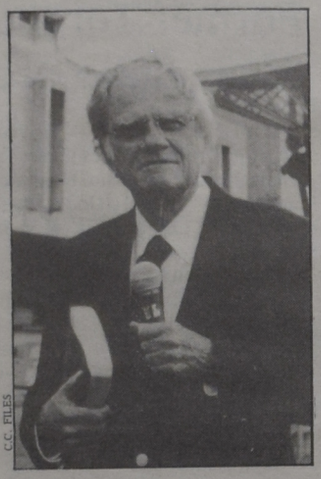
Graham announces massive 1996 global TV series

Potential audience of 2.5 billion

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. (BGEA) — Billy Graham announced as the year began that the Global Television Series — to be broadcast at prime time on April 14 in every country of the world — will bring the gospel to more people on that single day than on any previous day in history.

"Through the [series] we anticipate reaching 2.5 billion people, most of whom we could never reach in our usual crusade ministry," Graham said. "I believe this will have a far greater impact than anything we have ever done before."

A special evangelistic preaching program featuring Graham will be broadcast in 42 languages on national television networks in more than 160 countries. It will also be broadcast on two of the largest intercontinental satellite networks in the world, STAR-TV and BSKYB, which cover approximately two-thirds of the world's population — including some countries traditionally opposed to the proclamation of the Gospel.



CCC FILES

Billy Graham

The telecast will be hosted by Sir Cliff Richard and includes cameo testimony appearances by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former U.N. ambassador Andrew Young.

Two weeks before the preaching program is aired, each national TV network will also broadcast at prime time one of two hour-long dramatic Billy Graham Evangelistic Association feature films, interpreted into the same languages.

The film broadcasts will include promotional announcements for the preaching program. Many countries are providing free air time in exchange for their use of the feature films, which will often be aired several times.

One million churches, which have worked with BGEA on recent evangelistic programs, have been invited to participate in this outreach, mobilizing their members in a program called Operation Matthew.

Fits the 21st century church

Three million homes are expected to take part in this program, which is based on the biblical account of the tax collector who — following his life-changing encounter with Christ — invited colleagues and friends to his home to meet Jesus, his honored guest.

Rather than focusing on bringing people to an urban stadium or church, the goal of Global Television Series is to empower church pastors and lay leaders. This paradigm shift is expected to characterize the profile of the church in the 21st century, as churches in the traditional mission fields of developing countries themselves become increasingly mission-minded.

In addition to arranging for the television broadcasts in multiple editions, BGEA will also co-ordinate the distribution of 445 million pieces of literature, including houseparty discussion guides and follow-up materials in many languages, which are appropriate for intercultural use.

Quebec can't separate without Catholic vote, says poll

OTTAWA (CCN) — Quebec separatists will need the support of committed francophone Catholics to win any future referendum, says an Angus Reid poll conducted during the last referendum campaign.

In interviews with 1,850 people, the pollsters discovered that 60 per cent of committed francophone Catholics said they would vote No. That compared with 24 per cent of francophones who voted No and who described themselves as having no religious affiliation.

Angus Reid himself, and Andrew Grenville, senior vice-president of the Angus Reid group, said in the *Ottawa Citizen* on Jan. 2 that the committed Catholics appeared to have made their decision to vote No without the direct leadership of church authorities. The pollsters said the results show that "when we ignore the role religion plays in shaping our society, we do so to the impoverishment of our understanding."

Reid said there was "powerful" reason to believe that committed Catholics voted No because they view separation as a threat to a "sacramental" community.

Poll results also showed that many Catholic francophones who voted Yes did so not because they wanted sovereignty but because they wanted a mandate for Quebec to negotiate a new deal with the federal government.

For sovereigntists to gain the support of the majority of Quebecers, Reid and Grenville said, they will have to make headway among committed Catholics. "Should they fail in this, they risk splitting Quebec society not only between francophones and others, but also between francophones who are committed Catholics and those who are not," concluded the pollsters.

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CRC returns missionaries to Sierra Leone

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRWM) — More than a year after missionaries with Christian Reformed World Missions fled war-ravaged Sierra Leone, they have finally returned to the West African nation. Paul and Mary Kortenhoven are now living in the capital city, Freetown.

Although the U.S. State Department categorizes Sierra Leone as "extremely hazardous," after assessing the current situation Paul Kortenhoven called World Missions administrators in Grand Rapids in mid-December and encouraged missionary colleagues Roger and Yvonne Kraker to join them. The Krakers left Grand Rapids, Mich., and returned to Sierra Leone on January 1. Jan Disselkoen, a missionary with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), has returned to the country, too.

The missionaries left Sierra Leone in Nov. 1994 when insurgents swept through the remote northern part of the country killing people and burning homes, including those of the Kortenhovens and Disselkoen.

Seven-year conflict

The fighting is related to the tribal conflict that broke out in neighboring Liberia in 1989 and began to spill over into Sierra Leone in 1991. Sierra Leone's current leader, 29-year-old President Valentine Strasser, himself came to power in an April 1992 *coup*, toppling the government of former President Joseph Momoh. Strasser faces elections in February and is now gaining the upper hand over the rebels with the help of South African mercenaries. World Missions leaders hope, however, that on-going negotiations will preclude a military solution.

Before the war, Christian Reformed World Missions and CRWRC worked together with Sierra Leoneans in an organization known as Christian Extension Services (CES). The seven Sierra Leonean evangelists and nearly 20 nationals who work in development and agriculture projects were able to keep CES running in the absence of the missionaries.

Working towards independence

In addition to advances in sanitation, income generation, and health care, about 1,000 Kuranko people attend regular worship services in 20 rural villages. Upon resuming work, missionaries plan to bring CES to independence from the mission.

"The plan is for the Kortenhovens to remain in Freetown and try to form a local board of Christian leaders from churches, businesses and government to oversee the future work of CES," says Ron Geerlings, World Missions Program Director for Africa. "This would enable CES to become less dependent, especially in development work, on the resources of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. For example, the new board could seek funds from the European Community and other bodies who are prepared to invest in Sierra Leone."

The Krakers, meanwhile, returned to their home in the village of Soliya, where Roger Kraker is working in discipleship and leadership development programs with the emerging worship groups.

Both the Kortenhovens and Krakers anticipate that this will be their last two-year term in Sierra Leone. The CRC mission in Sierra Leone began as a world hunger project in 1979 and has grown into more diverse ministries of development and evangelism since then.

Church

The Lord is not slow, but patient

Andrew Kuyvenhoven
CHAPTER & VERSE

The biggest problem of the Church of Christ is the not-yet-fulfilled promise of the Lord's coming. Where is he? Why does he stay away so long? It is now nineteen hundred and ninety-six years since the beginning of the Christian era. Almost 50 generations have come and gone but Christ has not yet appeared.

The New Testament has no answer to our impatient questions. It says that the Lord is coming "soon" (Rom.16:20, Rev.22:20). We are not allowed to think of the coming of the Lord as a far-off event. The present time of our suffering is only a "little while" (1 Peter 4:10), while "the end of all things is near" (4:7). The present will soon be past but the future will soon be present. That awareness is supposed to color our lives.

Only one New Testament passage directly addresses the concern about the not-yet-fulfilled promise of Christ's return. It's 2 Peter 3:3-13. "Scoffers" say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Nothing has changed since creation." But they overlook the flood, says the writer. God's Word created a world out of water and the Word that destroyed the world by water is the same Word that today preserves the world for the fire of judgment (vv.5-7).

The writer wants us to think of God's being and character (8,9). God's understanding of time is not ours. With the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day. And we miss the point when we think of God as being slow. Rather, he is patient and loving. He wants all of us to repent before he sends the fiery judgment.

Problematic for scoffers

Many Bible scholars have said that the passage in 2 Peter (a book that is younger than nearly all books in the New Testament and suspect for various reasons) arose from the need to "explain" the return that did not happen. These scholars find the passage to confirm their own theory that, originally, Christ and the Christians expected a speedy coming of the everlasting kingdom. But, when that did not happen, Christianity became a religious institution.

It is true that the passage presents difficulties. When we are promised that the return of the Lord is "near," a word is used that has meaning in our own view of time. "Near" is not far. 2 Peter does not change that. But we may not place this "near" in a human calculation from which we conclude that the Lord is "slow in keeping his promise." If we do that, we end up in the seat of the scoffers.

If we want to stay away from the scoffers, says 2 Peter, we must keep in mind, first, that the time of the event cannot be calculated (the thief in the night, vs. 10). We must also learn that the long wait doesn't mean that God is indifferent or "slow." Rather, the long wait shows God's love and patience, aimed at humanity's conversion.

Every day is still a day of grace and a call to conversion. God is patient.But he will do what he promised. "In keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (v.13).

Andrew Kuyvenhoven has resolved to think of and pray for the return of the Lord every day in 1996. He is currently doing that in Miami, Florida.

Muslims, Christians clash in Ghana's central city

Neither side will back down

Ben Ephson

KUMASI, Ghana (NNI) — Authorities in Ghana have issued an indefinite ban on street preaching and religious services in public places near the country's second largest city of Kumasi following clashes between Muslims and Christians late last year in which at least two churches were damaged.

The incident marks a shift in Muslim/Christian violence from the coastal town of Sekondi-Takoradi, where troubles rocked the communities between July and September, to the central city of Kumasi. Located some 170 miles northwest of the capital Accra, Kumasi is the site of West Africa's largest open air market.

A senior government security source said authorities were concerned about a "looming religious time bomb" in Ghana. "I can assure you that we will defuse it," the source told NNI in Accra. "It is unnecessary and potentially a very dangerous situation which can get out of hand."

Fomenting religious strife

A press release issued by the Ashanti Regional Security Council stated that police have been directed to arrest and prosecute any person whose activity is likely to "foment religious strife" or breach the peace.

A senior police source told NNI in Kumasi that the trouble started on November 30 when a group of Muslim youths destroyed speakers and amplifiers being used by a group of Christian evangelists. Christian youths responded by smashing trading stalls and sheds belonging to some Muslims in the area. Warning shots by police failed to disperse the agitated crowd. Traders in the area closed their shops to avoid looting.

In the melee, Muslims attacked Christian churches, including the Presbyterian and Methodist churches at Asawasi, destroying windows and security lighting systems. At the Presbyterian church located near the central mosque, a church official told NNI that the youths looted more than 100 crates of soft drinks and stole an unspecified large sum of money received from weekly sales at the church's cafeteria.

The police source said eight people were seriously injured, and 17 people — mainly Muslims — were arrested in the wake of the unrest.

Neither side will back down

In an interview with the local media in Kumasi, Mohammed Awal, Imam of a group called the Jihad Preachers, charged that some Christian evangelists had been preaching against Islam, insulting Muslims and sometimes stamping on the Koran in actions which he said provoked Muslims to anger.

The Jihad Preachers alleged that some Christians had insulted them during Muslim prayers on November 29. Awal said when the prayers were over, the Muslims went to ask the Christian preachers why they had shouted insults. However, he said, a group of Christian youths started yelling and throwing objects at them.

He said the Muslims left the scene, mobilized forces and came back only to find that their makeshift mosque was burned down, and the Christians had left the scene.

A spokesperson for the Christian youths was unrepentant and issued a stern challenge to the Muslims. "The Muslims must be joking. Ghana, or Kumasi, is not a Muslim state," he said. "We will face them with an even greater amount of violence."

Clashes between Muslims and Christians are becoming more frequent in the West African country, especially now that increasing numbers of ethnic groups are becoming open to Islam, Christian sources said.

Many Christians were angered by a joint agreement signed in late October by the Christian Council of Ghana and the Muslim Representative Council pledging "to respect each other's religion."

Some fundamentalist Christians maintain that Muslims are not held accountable when they preach or say things that are blasphemies against the Bible. "Christians just disregard them in the spirit of love. We agree to 'respect' if that means tolerance and love; but the Muslims don't understand that," said one angry Christian.

Prepared for battle

Representatives from both Christian and Muslim youth groups told NNI they are prepared to do battle. They said problems now facing the religious communities began in Sekondi-Takoradi when a Christian evangelist, who converted from Islam, was attacked in July.

The youths added that the crisis is being fueled by religious audio cassettes which are currently on sale in Kumasi. Muslims who have converted to Christianity have recorded cassettes in which they are charged with making derogatory statements about the Prophet Mohammed and Islam. Christians who have converted to Islam have likewise recorded cassettes making what are believed to be derogatory statements about Jesus Christ and Christianity. Both groups use the cassettes in their preaching and religious services.

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Feature

An immigrant's view of Canada

The following article is a speech given by Syrt Wolters on November 9, 1995, to a meeting of the Victoria Rotary Club, of which Wolters has been a member for many years. Fellow Rotarian Croffard MacLean told CC that Syrt's speech got a standing ovation.

Syrt Wolters

I am a post-war immigrant from the Netherlands. Even before I came to Canada in 1948 there was a warm relationship between the Dutch and the Canadians. The celebrations of the 50th anniversary of D-day last May have given ample evidence of this.

When we took off from Rotterdam on the 19th of July, 1948, we were full of anticipation while we sailed for 10 days across the Atlantic. Before we left we had brushed up on our school English and we were quite confident we would be able to communicate with the officials in Canada.

We landed in Quebec City. Immediately we found out that communication was not as easy and as welcome as we had anticipated. We could not use our English. The customs people addressed us in French. We had never expected to be met in French. We also detected that these customs people were reluctant to speak English. They treated us as if to say: if you don't speak French you've no reason to be here. There went our dream of a warm welcome by Canadians!

What have we gotten into?

The second negative impression we received was at the railway station where we had to wait for eight hours for the train which would bring us to British Columbia. There we met a young woman with a bicycle. She approached us in a hesitant way and asked if we had just arrived from Holland. Then she told us that she was a war bride but had regretted coming to Canada. She was awfully homesick. Can you imagine what her experience did to us and the many questions it created in our minds? Was this Canada?

The third negative experience we had occurred while travelling by immigrant train across the prairies. We slept on the benches which could be pulled out to form beds. Our three children slept in one compartment; my wife and I in another. In spite of all the shaking and bouncing, and the monotonous cadence of the train, we fell asleep, overly tired from the new experiences.

Then, in the middle of the night someone pulled on our blankets and said something I could not understand, but it became clear that he was drunk and wanted to sleep between me and my wife. Apparently he had no ticket. Of course I pushed him away and tried to get across to him that he definitely was not going to sleep with us. I advised him to crawl into the luggage space above the seats. With much trouble he managed to get into the luggage compartment.

Neither my wife nor I could sleep after that. My wife was dead scared he would return. When the conductor came through to inspect if everything was all right, I pulled on his sleeve and pointed him to the luggage compartment.

At first he did not understand what I was trying to say, but finally he checked and found the man. He took him out, and at the next station (I think it was Port Arthur) the RCMP were waiting for him.

A turn for the better came in Edmonton, where we had to stay overnight in the immigration hall, a huge army-type building with only the five of us as guests. Our five-year old boy, Albert, became sick. He had quite a fever, so we were worried. What to do? We did not know a single soul in Edmonton. The custodian of the building advised us to take a taxi to the Alexandra Hospital because it was a holiday.

There, a woman doctor, a Dr. Solomons, saw us. She diagnosed a light cold, not too serious. When we asked whether it would be alright to continue our travels the next days, she said, "Check his temperature tomorrow morning; if it's down, you can go; if not, give me a call." She then waived all the charges!

Albert's temperature was down the next morning so we packed for our trek to the West. Then there was a knock on the door. It was the custodian. "Mr. Wolters, there's a telephone call for you," he said.

I thought: *Who on earth could be calling me in Edmonton?* It was Dr. Solomons. She wanted to know how Albert was! When I told her that he was alright, she said, "My best wishes to you and your family for a happy life in Canada!" Boy, did our opinion of Canada shoot up!

We boarded an ordinary train the next day. Fellow passengers started to talk. When they found out that we had just arrived from the Netherlands the climate turned positive immediately. They were so overwhelmingly warm that my wife and I got lumps in our throats.

Of course, I cannot go on to tell you about our experiences day by day. My older children and I have been in Canada now for nearly 48 years. My wife died rather suddenly in 1959 after having been in Canada for 11 years, the last five years in Victoria. And I can honestly say that her last five years were the happiest of her life.

The first six years we lived in Houston, a small town up north, halfway between Prince George and Prince Rupert. I started working as a section man for the CN railroad. For two winters I worked in the woods as a logger. In the spring of 1950 I started working at a planing mill in town, along the railroad.

Four months later, I was called to the office. The manager told me he wanted me to be in charge of operations.

I was flabbergasted. Me, being in charge of a planing mill — someone who had been a barber almost all his life?

The manager must be kidding or I must be dreaming! I told him right off the bat that I could not do it. I had no experience at all in running a mill. But he waved all my objections aside and said, "For the moment, I am interested in a man who can get along with people and who is a good organizer — a man who can keep that mill going. There are far too many stoppages."

I knew what he meant. Often I had wondered how this mill was making any money at all. If *this* mill made money, how much more a well-run mill would make!

The manager continued, "I've observed you for several weeks now and I think you are the man I need."

An unusual challenge

I told him again, "But, Mr. Parish, I know nothing about running a place like this." I added, "While working in the woods I can distinguish a Douglas fir from a pine tree or a balsam, but here, where all boards are naked, they have lost their identity, so I don't know what they are."

"Never mind," he said, "if you want to learn, there are all kinds of books and magazines to read and courses you can follow. We'll pay for it. Meanwhile, if you are stuck, ask one of the Indians in the yard; they know."

Expecting that he would give me at least some time to break in, I asked, "And when do you want me to start?"

"This minute," he said. "Here are the order the planer is working on now and here are the next orders," he said, handing me several sheets of paper. Then I suggested that he should come with me to introduce me to the crew as the new man-in-charge. He said, "If you are the man I think you are, you can manage that yourself. If you cannot do that, then you are not the man I think you are." In all my 38 years I have never had a challenge such as this.

I could tell many details of the reorganization of the yard, which improved the smooth operation of the mill considerably, but I have to limit myself to the day when I was called into the office by the accountant.

I had been in charge for a year and a half. Mr. Robinson, the accountant, had a few questions for me. He told me that the cost per thousand board feet from the moment the lumber came in till it was shipped, over the last year and a half, compared with the cost over the one and a half years immediately preceding me, had dropped from $6.25 to $4.50.

Considering that the mill had an annual production of around 25 million board feet, during my time of being in charge of

COURTESY SYRT WOLTERS

Syrt Wolters and his family in 1948

the operations the mill had saved a considerable amount of money. At the same time he was surprised that I had pushed up the hourly wages from $1.00 to $1.40. Then he asked: "Syrt, what's your secret?"

My only answer was, "PR, Sir." Don't think first in terms of dollars but in terms of people. If you can make the men like the work they're doing, then you've got it made. There must be co-operation, not confrontation."

In spite of having a job I liked, we left Houston in 1954. The lack of civilization in and around Houston got to me in the long run. We never heard a good concert, never saw a good movie; there was no library and no newspaper, and the radio reception was non-existent, except after dark. Houston had only an elementary school. Our children were growing up: What about their education?

The Wolters family's first home in Canada: a log house in Houston, B.C.

So we decided to move. After all, we had not emigrated to bury our children a thousand miles beyond civilization. I resigned from my job and we moved to Victoria where I resumed my old trade of hairstylist/barber.

Greater involvement

Canada, in general, and Victoria, in particular, have been extremely good to me and my family. I've lived in Victoria now for 41 years. During those years I became more and more involved in society life. I was instrumental in the founding of Pacific Christian School, which started as a fledgling three-room school but which has grown to an institute of learning with an enrollment in excess of 700 students.

Often I wrote letters-to-the-editor of various papers when I read something with which I couldn't possibly agree. I never wrote with the idea that I would change the mind of my opponent, but I felt that the readers of a paper or magazine should be exposed to other opinions.

However, looking back over the nearly 48 years I have been in Canada, I have some criticisms too. When I point these out to you, I want you to know that I say these things not because I don't like Canada, but because I do. It is out of my deep love for my adopted country that I feel compelled to bring up these ideas.

The first criticism I have is of the voting system. We are supposed to be ruled by the majority. The fact is that we are often ruled by a minority. Quite often the political party in power is not "ruling" the country or province, but rather is dictating its own pet peeves. The parties often govern as if they have 80 per cent of the voters behind them, while in reality they may have 40 per cent or less.

I understand that our voting practice is a left-over from England when that country was governed by its aristocracy. Do we still have to live by that? It has struck me more than once that we only vote "against" something or somebody. Often governments are elected by default. I have also sensed that we Canadians are averse to coalition governments.

Why is that so? Most European countries have had coalition governments for a long time. As long I can remember, my own old country has had coalition governments. And the Netherlands is certainly not known for its unstable governments.

How will things ever change in Canada? It is hard to expect that such change will come from a political party. This would eliminate every chance for them to form a government by a minority. I'm afraid that change has to be initiated from the grassroots.

Another bone I have to pick concerns labor laws we have in Canada. As long as labor union contracts include a "closed shop" clause, Canada will not be a true democracy in that field. I feel it is undemocratic that the available jobs in industry are reserved for union members. How would we feel if one had to be a member of a certain church or political party to be entitled to a job?

A price for democracy

I realize that labor unions would lose much of their power if that closed shop clause were eliminated, but that's the price we pay for being a democracy. On the job market, every citizen in good standing should have equal access to the number of available job opportunities. I am also disappointed, and not a little worried, that our labor laws assume that management and labor are natural enemies.

It has pleased me a great deal that a group of Dutch immigrants started the Christian Labour Association of Canada as far back as 1960. The goal of this labor organization is to create an atmosphere of co-operation instead of confrontation in the field of social relationships. This group had much trouble even being recognized as legitimate in Canada. It took court case after court case to finally, in 1963, receive the legal right to exist.

Can you imagine that this happens in democratic Canada?

I am starting to feel uncomfortable about bringing up another point. I — who have received so many good things from Canada and you Canadians — but I must get off my chest one or two more beefs.

I am not happy with the public school system as it exists in British Columbia, and, as I understand it, in most provinces. Many, with me, feel that as long as we have a public school system in which the government prescribes the curriculum, Canada will not be a true democracy. The system as we have it now is a serious violation of our basic democratic freedom: freedom of religion.

All education worthy of its name is based on a certain religion — or philosophy, if you will. And it is the primary right and responsibility of parents, not the government, to choose an education for their children. As a member of the United Nations, Canada has signed the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights. Article 26 of this document states: "It is the parents' right to choose the kind of education for their children."

But as long as we have our present system, Canada is paying only lip-service to its signature. Only recently our B.C. Minister of Education ordered the Abbotsford school board what it could teach. He was overstepping his prerogative and meddling in what people "believe." The ministry ordered people "what to believe." Apparently more and more parents are becoming aware of the education system's faults, seeing the fast-growing number of independent schools in our province. Many of these schools have a waiting list an arm long. Doesn't that tell us something?

PHOTOS COURTESY SYRT WOLTERS

Syrt Wolters' present home in Victoria, B.C.

Understanding Quebec

In closing, I would like to finish were I started: Quebec. After our negative experience when we arrived we, too, nursed negative feelings toward Quebec. But after I enrolled in a few correspondence courses in English and Canadian history, I learned that when the British came to this continent the French had already been here for over a hundred years. I've always had difficulty in understanding why these two groups could not live next to each other as good neighbors. The country was sure big enough. Why did the French have to be conquered?

History study has taught me, too, that Quebec is the only province which did not join the Canadian federation by its own free will. It was "clubbed" into it. Of course, this has created resentment; it is no wonder that Quebec, so far, has come along only reluctantly.

Long-term resentment

All along there has been an under-current of resentment. It has smouldered under the surface, occasionally bursting into flame. It burned brightly when General De Gaulle cried "Vive Le Quebec" in 1967. Since then things have never been the same. General De Gaulle may be dead in France, but he is alive and well in Quebec. I'm afraid that unless Quebec gains its sovereignty again, Canada will have its own "Ireland" on its hands.

Perhaps by now you are disgusted with all my criticism. I want to repeat that it is exactly because I love Canada that I call your attention to these things. I am proud to be a Canadian. I am proud being named a Paul Harris Fellow by you, my fellow Rotarians! I am also proud to be a Rotarian, clearly evidenced by my 100 per cent attendance record. I am very grateful for what Canada has meant to me and my family. Because I love my country Canada I've made use of my privilege to express myself in freedom in a democratic Canada. For this I thank you profoundly.

Feature

Tolerating the intolerable:

From persecution to religious freedom

Anthony J. Looy

Someone once compared church dogma and its role to a walking cane, suggesting that the purpose of a cane is to support a person when walking — not to hit someone over the head. In earlier times this gentle piece of advice would have fallen on deaf ears. During the 15th, 16th and much of the 17th centuries, dogmas or particular Christian beliefs were turned into "engines of civil war and bloodshed" (J.B. Wolf).

In those centuries freedom of religion was unheard of. Theologians and intellectuals of all stripes could not conceive of religious toleration and considered such freedom anti-biblical and even diabolical. After all, the biblical message was God's truth and this truth should be interpreted only by the Church.

The problem was that Catholics looked to the papacy or to church councils to define the truth, while Protestants thought that the medieval church was corrupt and diseased and wished to return to the thruths of the early church. Peaceful co-existence was definitely against God's will, they thought.

Equal-opportunity bigotry

The best-known Catholic theologian/philosopher in the 13th century, Thomas of Aquinas, equated heretics with counterfeiters: both should be put to death. In the 1540s, Cardinal Caraffa in Rome re-invigorated the papal Inquisition, a tribunal designed to stamp out heresies. One of the rules of this Inquisition was drawn up by Caraffa himself: "No man is to lower himself by showing toleration towards any sort of heretic, least of all a Calvinist."

After Cardinal Caraffa became Pope Paul IV at the age of 79, he vented his hatred of everything that was not Catholic by stating, "Even if my own father were a heretic, I would gather the wood to burn him." His bigotry was certainly not only directed against Protestants. It was the same pope who forced Jews to wear a yellow hat and ordered them to live in a ghetto with only one exit.

To root our heresies, the papal Inquisition used a variety of means: banishment, imprisonment, torture and execution — usually by burning at the stake.

A shameful episode

Protestants, especially the Calvinists, detested religious freedom as much as the Catholic Church did. In Geneva, physician Jerome Bolsec, who had been friendly with Calvin, fell out with the reformer and began to attack some of Calvin's teachings, in particular predestination. Bolsec, who insisted that Calvin's doctrines "turned God into a tyrant" (O. Chadwick), was found guilty of heresy. After having been imprisoned for a while, Bolsec was banished from Geneva.

C.C. FILES

Members of a tribunal torture a prisoner to make him confess heresy.

A more notorious case was the Spaniard Michael Servetus, a learned man who had studied law, medicine and theology. In his writings he had attacked the doctrine of the Trinity, shocking Catholics and Calvinists alike. The unstable Servetus also denied original sin and considered infant baptism as "diabolical."

Before arriving in Geneva, Servetus had been tried and condemned to death by the Inquisition but had managed to escape from his prison. When he was discovered in Geneva, living under an assumed name, he was found guilty of heresy and was — again — condemned to death by fire. Calvin had given his support to the entire proceedings against Servetus.

Although Calvin would have preferred a more "humane" death by beheading, Servetus was burned at the stake in 1553. He died with the prayer on his lips: "Jesus, Son of the eternal God, have mercy on me." In his book on the story of Calvinism, J.T. McNeill, comments, "When all is understood, admirers of Calvin must still look at it [Servetus' execution] with shame."

Theodore Beza, a French Reformed theologian who would later succeed Calvin, came to Calvin's defense in a book written one year after Servetus' execution. Beza's conclusion was that religious freedom was "a most diabolical dogma because it means that everyone should be left to go to hell in his own way."

Voices of moderation

There were some voices during the 16th century pleading for moderation and a measure of religious freedom. One of these was the Frenchman Sebastian Castellio, who had stayed for a while at Calvin's house in Strassburg. The friendship between the two men fell apart when Castellio distanced himself more and more from some of Calvin's teachings. He did not endear himself to his fellow Calvinists when he crudely labelled *The Song of Songs* "a prostitute's song."

In his writings, Castellio, who had meanwhile moved to Basel, vehemently condemned the execution of Servetus, arguing that "differences in theological opinions cannot be worth killing a man for."

Others who pleaded early on for more gentleness and religious toleration were Erasmus of Rotterdam, Thomas More (who for a while was the confidant of the English King Henry VIII, but who was beheaded by Henry for not agreeing to the king's divorces) and William of Orange, to mention only a few.

The first country to officially introduce freedom of religion was the Netherlands, where in 1579 a number of provinces united as "The Union of Utrecht," soon to become the Dutch Republic. One of the written rules in the agreement or Covenant of 1579 was the stipulation that no one would be harassed or persecuted because of different religious or theological opinions. England officially established religious toleration — although with some exceptions — by the Test Act of 1689 under William III and Mary. In North America, Maryland became the first British colony to pass a religious Toleration Act in 1649.

Catholics and Calvinists were not the only ones to suffer religious persecution. The Moors in Spain, Jews, the pious and peaceful Anabaptists, and those who thought to practise witchcraft were also victimized in this religious mania. It has been said that "like the Jew, the witch became the stereotype of the incurabe nonconformist" (H.R. Trevor-Roper). It has been estimated that in the 300 years between 1400 and 1700 some 300,000 "witches" were executed.

From tolerance to indifference

The killing of heretics and religious intolerance began to subside during the late 17th century. The main reason for this change was the fact that rulers and governments imposed on subjects and churches the obligation to accept a certain toleration of different opinions in religion and theology. These rulers became unwilling to see their countries being damaged any longer by religious strife.

It is only in the next century that Enlightenment ideals, such as freedom of conscience and the worth of every individual, began to be gradually accepted in western society. But few blessings come pure and unmixed! The arrival of freedom of religion and pluralism gradually metamorphosed into a growing skepticism and religious indifference (R. Tarnas).

In 1646, when religious oppression was on the wane, Jeremy Taylor advocated publicly "that all Christians might agree on the few essentials of faith and on that basis practise true religion without disunity."

Perhaps it is worth our while to remember and ponder that the early church during the first two centuries did not persecute and required relatively few simple items of creed.

Anthony J. Looy is a retired school principal who holds a PhD in History. He lives in Edmonton, Alta.

Feature

On your mark, get set, *read!*

Bert Witvoet

They were strutting about impatiently at the starting line, waiting for the gun to go off. Although they had undergone little training for this event, all 42 of them plunged bravely into the run once the start signal had been given. It was January 1, 1995. The run was to last for 365 days, but the fast ones could do it in 120 hours.

On December 31, 29 jubilant survivors crossed the finish line — 11 men and 18 women (actually, one of the women was a 12-year-old girl named Lindsay Kochan.) The place was Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, Ont. The event, the Bible Marathon.

The idea for this event was the brainchild of Jubilee's pastor, Peter Slofstra. He had run the Boston Marathon in April of 1994. The day before the run, Peter and Marja had attended the First Congregational Church in Hopkinton, Mass., where a businessperson had given a testimony about reading the Bible daily and working his way through the Bible in one year. He did this year after year by following the regime indicated in a little pocket Bible.

A congregational project

What kind of Bible is that? Peter and Marja wondered. Upon visiting a local bookstore back home, they discovered *The Pocket Bible in One Year*. The book gives three portions of the Bible for each day — one from the Old Testament (a long passage), one from the New Testament (a medium passage) and one from the Psalms or Proverbs (a brief passage). After trying out the regime for a few months themselves, Peter and Marja decided to invite members of the congregation to join them for 1995 in, what was appropriately called, the Bible Marathon.

Lindsay Kochan receives her Bible Marathon 1995 pin from pastor Peter Slofstra.

In order to facilitate and encourage future participants, Peter had slotted in four accountability sessions for each week: groups of marathoners could meet with him for an hour to have their checkmark placed behind their names and to discuss together what had struck them about their reading of the previous week. As indicated above, 42 signed up and almost 70 per cent of this group finished. The church's secretary faithfully printed the next week's reading in each church bulletin.

At a celebrative meeting on January 2 of this year, 21 of the 29 shared their experiences. They also received a pin that said "Bible Marathon, 1995."

Trivia and substantia

Since I was one of the participants, I would like to let you in on what for me was a most rewarding experience. I can honestly say that my editorials during 1995 greatly benefited from the fact that I was constantly immersed in the Word of God. I saw things I had never seen before. Some were trivial, like realizing that Esther's Hebrew name was Hadassah, which connected with the Hadassah Bazaar in Toronto, run by Jewish women in honor of Esther. Others were more substantial, like sensing the unexpected unity of all these disparate books, letters, prophecies and poems.

I would also conclude that a church benefits immensely when 30 to 40 of its members commit themselves to a daily reading of Scripture and meet once a week outside of all other church activities, during lunch hour or before supper, to more or less experience what two disciples did on the road to Emmaus: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

PHOTOS: STEVE ABERNATHY

From the left, back row: Marinus Koole, Alice Dunbar, Bep Koole, Patricia Botbyl, Agnes Vrieze-Bos, Phil Kuipery, Marjorie Van Geest, Peter Slofstra, Marja Slofstra, Dean Bonsma, Marlene Bergsma, Jo-Anne Abma, Arlene Kuipery, Hilda Brink, Sally Vlaar:front row: Lynn Solomon, Bert Witvoet, Lindsay Kochan, Bill De Vries.

A cloud of witnesses

But let me tell you what 18 of the participants who attended the January 2 meeting said about their experiences. Here are excerpts of their accounts, in order of their appearance on the group photo:

Marinus Koole: "What really struck me was God's faithfulness in spite of all that people did."

Alice Dunbar: "I never liked Revelation and I still don't like it. It reminds me of Greek mythology, and I find that frightening. But I liked Paul's letters and feel that we can put any church's name on top and apply what he writes."

Bep Koole: "I felt a bonding with others who were doing the same readings each day. Psalm 104 is still my favorite."

Patricia Botbyl: "I fell almost five months behind. Something came over me when we had an evening worship service during which all kinds of people confessed their sins. I ended up reading 40 books in one week. I was disappointed when I was caught up, I had enjoyed it that much."

Agnes Vrieze-Bos: "The accountability sessions helped me stay disciplined. You also learn to see the Bible from someone else's perspective. Often I was able to use what I had read in a counseling session with a client, especially the text: 'See I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.' I used that text a lot."

Phil Kuipery: "I never expected to finish it. After attending all those accountability sessions I began to realize what my fellow workers were missing. I'm a shift worker. When I can't sleep at night, I often read the Bible."

Marjorie Van Geest: I was part of the Saturday morning group, which was a double challenge for me. First we had accountability session for half an hour, then we walked or ran for half an hour and then we had coffee and muffins. I am thinking of doing it again this year."

Peter Slofstra: "I really feel that God has spoken to me in ways that challenged me, even scared me, into doing what the Bible convicted me of doing. I found out that God's Word is really his word."

Marja Slofstra: "I didn't know I had the stamina and discipline. I'm now more confident in my Bible knowledge. I see God's plan more clearly."

Dean Bonsma: "The whole thing was very up and down, just like life — exciting at times, mind-boggling other times; sometimes disheartening, often difficult. It ran the whole gamut."

Marlene Bergsma: "The Bible became almost a diary for me. What I read that day related to what I was experiencing. That motivated me."

Jo-Anne Abma: "My mom and dad always read the Bible every day, so I simply continued in my parents' footsteps."

Arlene Kuipery: "It's kind of neat to read before going to work. It keeps you going for the rest of the day. It's the only book I know you can keep on reading again and again."

Hilda Brink: "I was amazed how well I knew some books and how poorly I knew others. What I really liked was seeing a line running through the Bible and hearing how important we are to God."

Sally Vlaar: "I am a morning person and would read early. I learned that, even though we screw up, God still loves us. We don't need to fear."

Lynn Solomon: "I discovered that once he's got you, God will never let you go. Reading the Bible helps you in family issues and day-to-day living."

Lindsay Kochan (aged 12)**:** The summer holidays were the hardest for me. But I realy enjoyed doing it. I thought it would be great to read the whole Bible."

Bill De Vries: "I always wanted to read through the Bible, then when I saw the invitation in the bulletin, I said, 'Bingo!' I learned a lot."

With these words ringing in our ears, perhaps some of you might be enticed to start your own Bible Marathon. Your year can start any month or any day, of course. God's work is not bound by the Julian calendar.

Environment

Englishman's toilet will feed your flowers

HARBERTONFORD, Devon — Dick Barton is on the verge of marketing an invention that could have an eco-friendly impact not only in the UK, but in Africa, the Middle East, China, and everywhere else where people are inquiring about his product.

The invention is Barton's waterless electronic biological (WEB) toilet. As its name says, it uses no water but does need an electricity source to operate, and a standard rain-water pipe for ventilation. Barton's invention is a patented modification of an established Swedish system, reports the *Guardian Weekly*.

The concept is simple. The toilet contains an absorbent starter compost which is rotated mechanically (Barton uses coconut shells, which are plentiful in many parts of the world). The compost is heated to evaporate moisture and a built-in fan ventilates odors to the outside.

Usable wastes

The heat treatment kills micro-organisms in the compost, which after drying is mechanically emptied into a bag for either disposal or for horticultural use.

Barton initially hopes to market his invention "for installation in buildings with drainage problems or where elderly or infirm people may need a long-term commode," says *The Guardian*.

A Cornish company will produce the toilet when all financial backing is in place. Barton has had inquiries from potential customers as diverse as the Greyhound bus company and officials in a desert city in China, as well as phone calls expressing interest from Africa and the Middle East.

Barton told *The Guardian* that four adults using the WEB would need to recharge it "about every three weeks." The coconut shells come from Sri Lanka, he adds. "There's mounds of it there."

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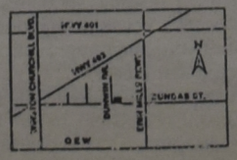

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Do we need Christian environmentalists?

Environmental Housekeeping

John Wood

To get things started in Children's church I passed out a few crackers, then I left the room for a moment. A little titter ran through the group as I walked back into the room. Every eye was on me, waiting to see what I would say or do. So, I asked "What?" Up shot the hand of a boy in the front row. "It wasn't me" he claimed, and the laughter and denials mounted as all eyes turned to the precocious little guy next to him.

"What do you mean, it wasn't you? What have you guys been up to? I was only out of the room for a moment. Did you open this bag?" I had placed it there a few moments before.

On it in bold black letters was the injunction: DO NOT OPEN! A loud chorus assured me that someone had opened it. I pulled out a handful of candy from within the bag. "Oh, that's too bad. I was planning on saving this for a special treat at the end of the lesson today. It was going to be a surprise. Now I will just put it away."

"But it wasn't me," came a plaintive cry. "It was him. He did it, not me." We were now well on our way to a lively discussion of the Fall in Genesis 3, our topic of the day.

What were Adam and Eve supposed to be doing? The answer to this question is obvious, but the force of it had escaped me until that moment. "Taking care of the garden," the class said.

Of course! How simple. And today the children of Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham and Sarah are still charged with caring for the "garden." It shouldn't surprise us that it is easy to become distracted from our task or to become discouraged by the enormity of life's challenges. But we need to remind ourselves that caring for creation is our special responsibility.

We can't merely pass it off to someone else. It is the environmentalists who have most recently and forcefully pointed out these facts to us. They have raised crucial issues over the past 30 years about caring for the creatures and respecting the earth.

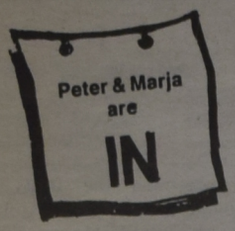
Integrity and skill: the essential tools of the trade

The knotty problems that lie at the heart to the environmental/economic nexus will not yield to mere technical fixes. It takes more than good technology to solve problems this complex. Across the continent corporations involved in resource extraction are beginning to recognize this fact. They are looking for people who can co-ordinate complex projects within a community or a bioregion; people who can communicate across the cultural and philosophical gulf that separates Natives and Europeans or environmental activists and technocrats; people who are respected by members of often opposing communities of interest; in short, people of integrity.

In Psalm 78:72, David's life is summarized this way: "and David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them." It takes more than a highly skilled work force to solve the issues we face. We must also have women and men who will act on what they know is right; people who can capture for today the principles of earthkeeping laid out in the Scriptures; who can translate the history of stewardship into a living program to solve the problems pressing us today.

Why do we need Christian environmentalists? Because the Creator loves his creation, and has charged us with its care and keeping.

John R. Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College in Edmonton.



Churches apply Bible's guidelines in many different ways

Dear P & M:

There are some matters and issues which the Bible does not clearly address. It troubles me that the church has used its authority to make certain decisions about these things, which has just caused more strife and dissension. Let me give some examples and ask some questions:

**** Were there any biblical grounds at the time for the institution of the office of deacon?***

**** What about the abolition of circumcision? Read what Paul did with Timothy in Acts 16:3.***

**** What biblical grounds are there for Sunday observance? I believe there are none. We only read some things about coming together or receiving/giving gifts on the first day of the week.***

Is it possible that the church has made some wrong decisions? I believe so. Start reading at Acts 21:17. Humanly speaking this foolish act of the church cost Paul his freedom and his life.

All of this brings into question our church's decisions about women in office and children's participation in the Lord's Supper. About the latter, I want to say that it does not hurt me when children may not partake in holy communion. What hurts me is [when children must remain in their seats and] are not allowed to be at the Lord's table (see Matthew 19:13-15; 21:15).

Dear Church's Authority:

We could easily add to your list of church practices and issues about which the historical church made different decisions than we do, or how different churches have made different decisions. Some examples: who, when and how to baptize; frequency of worship and liturgical styles; and what it means to be "in the world but not of the world" (think of the lifestyle differences between the Reformed and Amish worldviews on this question alone.)

You asked us to look at the book of Acts. We did, and as we paged through it we saw a struggling church trying to decide what to do about circumcision, how to present the gospel to the Gentiles, and whether or not Old Testament laws and purification rites still applied.

We conclude that the New Testament Church was constantly developing as it tried to put Christ's principles into practice. As a result, we have only raw guidelines for how to be the church; since then the historical church has applied those guidelines differently, depending on the location, needs, gifts and insights of each community.

Let's see how this works itself out with one of the issues you've raised: the office of deacon.

In Acts 6 we learn that seven men were chosen to administer the daily distribution of food to the widows. Although they were not called deacons at this time, the Greek word *diakonia* is used twice in this passage to describe their material ministry. The apostles laid hands on them, thereby ordaining them to this task.

By the time Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy, the office of deacon was firmly in place. In this letter Paul spells out the characteristics of a good deacon, but he does not give us a specific job description. Is that unfortunate? We don't think so. Obviously, God's approach is to give us some basic principles and guidelines — and his Spirit. That's all the authority we need. From that, various church families have worked things out differently.

How wonderful that Christians the world over share the same biblical foundation while working out matters of church polity, worship and ministry in such refreshingly varied ways. Whether the issue is Sunday observance, worship style or children partaking of communion, the best approach is to put whatever the Bible says about a matter on the table. Then be prepared to be surprised by how little the Bible actually *prescribes*, and how much room we are given to implement Scripture's guidelines.

Bible study, prayer, deliberative assemblies and committed Christians who are open to the leading of the Spirit are the ingredients of a vital Christian church. Because fallen human beings are involved in all of this, different conclusions will be drawn and mistakes will be made. And mistakes *have* been made! Nevertheless, whatever authority the church has is derived from the Lord Jesus Christ. When his will is done, God is praised and people are blessed.

Write to: Peter and Marja Slofstra, 16 Kimbermount Drive, St. Catharines, ON L2N 5V6

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Lidkea, Alan Vandermaas, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.

Public gloom and economic hope

John Hiemstra

"Happy New Year!" has barely passed our lips and Canadians are back to a glum state of mind. This matches the media's assessment, just prior to Christmas, which found Canadians full of "doom, gloom and disaster."

This view was based on a poll that found many Canadians are deeply pessimistic about Canadian unity, increased crime, personal economic advancement, tax hikes and the ability of government to provide pensions, unemployment insurance and other social programs. The poll was conducted by Allan Gregg's Strategic Counsel company for *Macleans* and CBC-TV's *The National*.

What's going on in Canada?

Gregg interpreted this gloom, on CBC's *The National*, as a "loss of faith in all aspects of institutions of this country."

Linda Goyette, an *Edmonton Journal* columnist, wisely observed that the pollsters and pundits were distorting the picture. Many of those polled, she notes, "say they are growing more spiritual in outlook, which must mean they feel a capacity for contentment even when the harder facts of life get in the way" (Dec.19, 1995).

The poll does, in fact, offer encouraging news on this score. "Eighty per cent of those polled said they are spiritual people. Forty-nine per cent said they had grown even more spiritual in the past years." And another 55 per cent said "they had grown more in love with their partner or spouse in the past year" (*Globe and Mail*, Dec. 18).

How does the media interpret this conflict between public gloom and growing spiritual and family values? *Maclean's* editor Robert Lewis suggests: "It's almost as if Canadians are saying 'Yuck, this country is a mess, but at least in the space I control I know things are going to be good'" (*Globe and Mail*, Dec. 18, 1995).

Unfortunately, the media once again dredges up the dualism between faith in private — 'the space I control' — and no faith in public affairs.

This answer is much more than a simple exegesis of poll results, however. It is a big part of the problem! Saying faith is irrelevant in the public square entices us to ignore the spiritual forces at work in public.

I believe Canada's pessimism is profoundly linked to our loss of faith in Canada's *public* doctrine. Canadians have given up on the two major planks of Enlightenment dogma of "progress." First, we no longer believe "the market" will guarantee our children a better economic life than we have. Second, we do not believe the state can still provide cradle-to-grave security as was promised for decades.

Loosing faith in this idea of progress has led to a deep sense of gloom and fear.

But fear and gloom are not "fate." The good news is that God has not left us stranded in our sin, suffering, poverty and injustice. Immanuel! God is with us. Jesus the Messiah has paid our ransom and sets us right with God.

Where ever sin twists our economic and political life, there we must claim this good news! The church must recover an active ministry to the needs and pain of Canadian political and economic live.

Pro-life economics

The temptation is to say, "Amen, let's create an inner city foodbank ministry." This type of ministry is absolutely essential. But much more is required. We need to understand the patterns, structures and heart beat of work-a-day economic and political life.

Concerned Christians might start by reading Bob Goudzwaard and Harry de Lange's *Beyond Poverty and Affluence* (University of Toronto Press). *(See review, C.C., Jan. 5).*

In a clear and non-academic way, the authors help Canadians understand issues such as public debt, poverty, environmental degradation and unemployment. Significantly, they explain *why* these problems consistently resist being solved by remedies such as increasing economic growth, advancing scientific research or applying more technology. This may well be the most significant economic book of 1995!

John Hiemstra teaches political science at The King's University College, Edmonton.

Comment

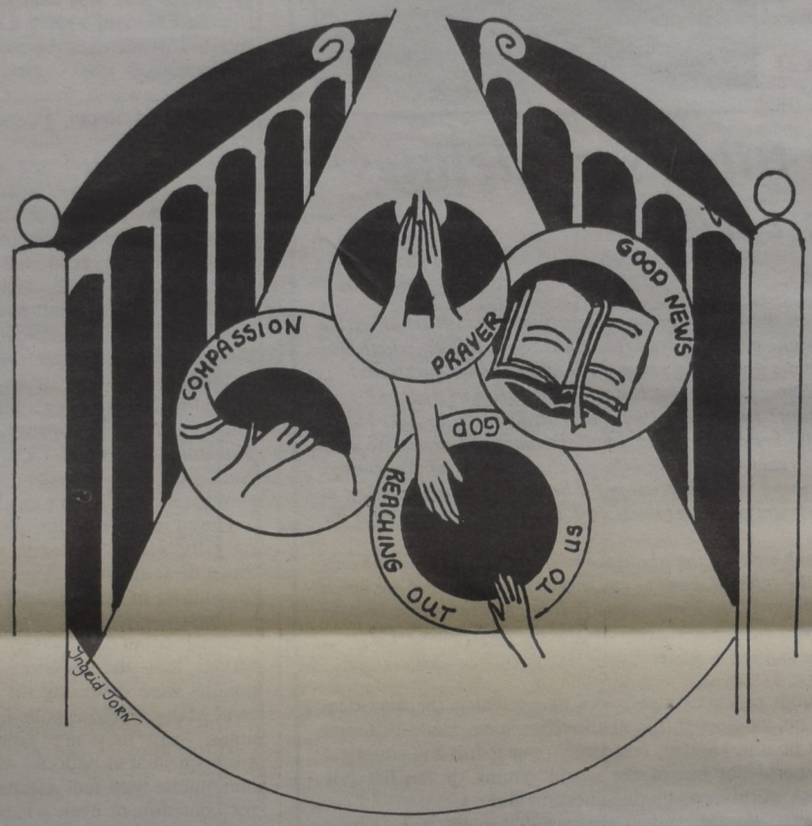
Is judgment good news?

Gabe Rienks

Ever since the article "Judgment as Good News" appeared in the June 30, 1995, issue of *Christian Courier*, the question has haunted me, "Is judgment indeed *good news*?"

I understand the concerns of the Rev. Laura Smit: if there were no judgment, evil would prevail in this world. But does this make judgment *itself* part of the "good news of great joy" of the Holy Night?

Certainly, there are in the psalms those agonizing cries; "How long, o Lord, will the wicked be jubilant? Repay them for their sins, Lord, destroy them for their wickedness." But does this cry for justice, or rather for revenge, form the essence of the gospel? Don't we hear throughout the Bible the heartbeat of God's love, sorrow and compassion for his lost world? And did not God's people stand on God's side in that suffering? Did they rejoice in God's judgments?



Sorrow of the saints

There is the story of Abraham. When God told him that he was going to punish Sodom for its sins, Abraham — in whom all nations would be blessed — did not rejoice, but threw himself as mediator into the breach for that godless city.

When God told Moses that he was going to destroy Israel after they had made for themselves "gods of gold," Moses pleaded with the Lord: "Forgive their sin — but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written."

And Jeremiah did not experience God's judgments upon Jerusalem as "Good News." On the contrary, he wept, his eyes overflowed with tears and there was no one who could comfort him. All Jeremiah could do was pray for mercy and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

Yes, even God himself suffers and is filled with compassion when the storm of his anger sweeps over his people. There is God's moving lament: "Why should you be beaten anymore? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart is afflicted. There is no soundness — only wounds and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil."

When Jesus, for the last time, approached the Holy City and saw black clouds of doom gathering over Jerusalem, he *wept*. And when they nailed him to his cross he did not cry for revenge; he prayed for forgiveness, a prayer that embraced the whole world, for we all are guilty.

No pain, no compassion

Some time ago I attended a conference at which one of the lectures was on "The Judgment of the Ungodly." It was no problem to find examples like that parable of the man who thought that he could participate in a wedding feast without bothering about the proper wedding clothes. He was "thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The professor talked about the ungodly, the doomed, thrown into utter darkness, as if it were the most normal happening in the world. Didn't he realize that the destiny of millions and millions was at stake? If this learned man had had tears in his eyes his words would have come across more believably. But driving home I felt sad. In fact, I cried. To me the lecture itself had been godless, without any pain or acknowledgement of the compassion of the God I know and love.

Aren't we all his creatures, wonderfully knit together by him in our mother's womb? Don't we all reflect the beauty of his face? Don't we all show God's fingerprints as being his masterpiece? Did not Jesus see in the most wretched man or woman that divine dimension of eternity?

A question of statistics

It is strange with how much ease we sometimes talk about those who are outside, the doomed, the lost — if we think of them at all. Often we Christians believe we can settle the whole issue by simply saying, "We don't know, judgment is God's business." As if it were not our concern also; as if there were no answer to that agonizing question of the salvation of the greater part of humankind.

Calvin estimated that about 10 per cent of humankind would be saved. Many orthodox Christians used to and still designate at least 95 per cent of the human race as lost.

Judgment as Good News? If there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, how much sorrow must there be in heaven, in God's heart, when so many of his children don't take the road back to their Father's house. And how much sorrow and pity should fill *our* hearts.

Our fruits, their forgiveness

In Ravensbruck Nazi concentration camp there was found a piece of wrapping paper near the body of a dead child. Written on it was the following prayer: "O Lord, remember not only the men and women of good will, but also those of ill will. Do not only remember the suffering they have inflicted on us, remember the fruits we brought, thanks to this suffering: our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, the courage, the generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this. And when they come to judgment, let all the fruits we have borne be their forgiveness."

For me it is easier to recognize the presence of Jesus in that prayer than in the cool academic presentation of the professor I mentioned.

In Auschwitz, Dr. Victor Frankl, himself a survivor, talked with a young surgeon, Dr. Paul Furst, and a general physician, Dr. Ernst Rosenberg, shortly before they died there in the camp. "In Memorian" Dr. Frankl wrote: "In their last words there was not a single word of hate. Only words of longing came from their lips, and words of forgiveness, because what they hated was not a human being — a person must be able to forgive humans — but what they hated and what we hate was the system, the system which brought some men to guilt and which brought others to death."

Wide gates

Yes, God will judge and evil will not prevail, but amidst the dark clouds of his anger the bright lights of hope keep shining. As James wrote in his letter, "Mercy triumphs over judgment." And the visions of the Old Testament prophets that the ends of the earth would come and worship the Lord were not just nice dreams, they are the sure promises of him who one day will be "all in all." That is why I believe that the gates of the New City will be open much, much wider than we have ever dreamed of. Judgment of the ungodly. It always reminds me of the poster I once saw:

I prayed for justice,
then I thought of myself,
and I prayed for mercy.

I am still praying for mercy, for myself, and for this whole wounded groaning world — God's world.

Gabe Rienks is a retired Presbyterian minister who lives in Brantford, Ont.

Classifieds

Classified Rates

(Revised February 1, 1995)

Births $25.00
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Anniversaries $45.00
2-column anniversaries . $90.00
Obituaries $45.00
Notes of thanks $35.00
Birthdays $40.00

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Note: All rates shown above are GST inclusive

ATTENTION!

a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.,

b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

d) *Christian Courier* will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.

e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to five column inches. *Christian Courier* reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of $15.00 per column inch (GST incl.).

NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS

We offer a one-year subscription for only $25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the *Christian Courier* and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose $25.00 and the couple's correct address.

Christian Courier
4-261 Martindale Rd.
St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1
Phone: (905) 682-8311
Fax: (905) 682-8313

Share your family news in 1996 with the rest of us. Place an ad in C.C.

Anniversaries

1956 January 25 1996

We, the children and grandchildren of

BOUKE and TRUUS HOEKSTRA (ROMEIJN)

have this opportunity to thank the Lord for the gift of our parents, as they celebrate their 40th anniversary.

With love from:
Jake & Hillie Hoekstra — Drayton, Ont.
Robert, John, Gerald, Charlie
Peter & Joanna Hoekstra — Belleville, Ont.
Robert
Joanne Hoekstra — Greenwood, N.S.
Kelly & Jim Kelly — Greenwood, N.S.
Stefanie, Benjamin
Home address: R.R.#3, Brighton, ON K0K 1H0

1951 January 26 1996

We are grateful and thankful that our God has given our parents and grandparents

PIETER and ANN HORST (nee VAN RIJN)

45 years of marriage.
Love and best wishes from:
Elly & John Valk — Fredericton
John-Harmen, Nathaniel, Michael
Fred & Diana Horst — Montreal
Peter, Matthew, Erika, David, Justin
Karin & Len Havinga — Sarnia
Brian, Stephen, Eric, Luke
Marnie & Henry Kranenberg — Brockville
Peter, Danielle, Karen, Joel
Anita & Jack Vander Veer — Pakistan
Samuel, Elysha, Mark
Judy & Matthew Bastian — Ottawa
Rachel, Trevor, Christopher, Joshua
Home address: 55-15th St., Roxboro, QE H8Y 1N7

Employment Wanted

Enthusiastic, Dutch Chr., with a Can. Chr. wife and two young children, will be immigrating to Ontario in May, and we **are looking for work.** I have much **logistics/warehouse** exp. and my wife is an **elem. Chr. Sch. teacher.** We are willing to settle anywhere the Lord leads. Please contact: Robert and Annette Schreuders, Kruiszwin 3712, 1788 PN Den Helder, the Neth. Phone: 011-31-223-644203, or our Can. contact, **G. Oosterhof, Tel./Fax 1-613-541-0101.**

Obituaries

Suddenly on Oct. 14, 1995, the Lord took unto Himself,

ALICE VANDERTUIN (nee VAN MEEKEREN)

at the age of 61.
Loving wife of Robert.
Dear mother of:
John & Sherry Vandertuin
Jack & Jo-Anne Verboom
Edwin & Susan Vandertuin
Bruce & Sandra Cruickshank
Randy Vandertuin
Proud grandmother of eight grandchildren.
Sister to:
Martin van Meekeren
Mrs. Henrietta Bekkering
Frank van Meekeren
Clarence van Meekeren
Fred van Meekeren
The funeral was held on Oct. 17, 1995, in Kentville Chr. Ref. Church, Kentville, N.S., Pastor Sidney Cooper officiating.

Teachers

BOWMANVILLE, Ont.: Knox Chr. School invites applications for a **possible Grade 6** teaching position commencing May 1, 1996. Interested qualified applicants should submit letter of application, references, and resume as soon as possible to:

Bill Helmus, Principal
Knox Chr. School
410 Scugog St., R.R.1
Bowmanville, ON L1C 3K2
School: (905) 623-5871
Home: (905) 623-6952
Fax: (905) 623-8877

MAPLE RIDGE, B.C.: Haney-Pitt Meadows Chr. School is an interdenominational school, currently presenting Christian education from Kindergarten to Grade 8. With a preference towards experienced teachers, we are now accepting applications for definite teaching positions in the intermediate and Middle School grades. Please send resumes to:

Rod Berg, Principal
Haney-Pitt Meadows Chr. School
12140 203rd Street
Maple Ridge, BC V2X 4V5
Phone: (604) 465-4442
or Fax: (604) 465-1685

Job Opportunities

Herdsman/manager wanted. 44 tie stall barn. Some field work necessary.

Call (613) 398-6956

Job Opportunities

Alliston Community Christian School
invites applications for the position of

PRINCIPAL

to assume responsibilities for the **1996/97 school year**. ACCS is an interdenominational school consisting of 72 students in grades K-8 and a dedicated staff of four full-time and one part-time teacher. ACCS is located in beautiful **Alliston, Ont.**, the heart of Ontario's potato country, appr. one hour north of Toronto. Responsibilities will include spiritual, educational and administrative leadership within the school and promoting the school within the Society and the community. Please send your application by **Feb. 16, 1996**, to:

Doreen Horlings, Chairperson Search Committee
123 Eighth Ave., Alliston, ON L9R 1V5, Phone: (705) 435-4429.

PRINCIPAL

The **Edmonton Society for Christian Education** is searching to fill the vacancy of **High School Principal**, commencing **August 1, 1996.**

Our 170-student, grades 10-12 High School has been a reformational presence in Edmonton for more than 25 years.

Applicants who have the experience, vision and skills to lead our staff and students and to work within an administrative team led by a superintendent, are encouraged to apply before **February 16, 1996**. We expect applicants to be eligible for an Alberta Teaching Certificate. The salary will be commensurate with training and experience.

Please send resumes and a brief statement of your philosophy of education to:

Dr. Alyce Oosterhuis, President
Edmonton Society for Christian Education
13470 Fort Road, Edmonton, AB T5A 1C5

Miscellaneous

Student Financial Aid

Classis Huron Student Fund Committee of the Christian Reformed Church invites applications for Student Financial Aid from students preparing for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. Applications must be in before **March 15, 1996.** Contact: **Rev. Nathan Elgersma, 42 Pentetangore Row, Kincardine, ON N2Z 2N5.**

Classifieds

Church News

Christian Reformed Church

Classis meeting:

— **Classis B.C. North-West** will meet on March 5-6 in the Burnaby CRC, 5825 Nelson Ave., Burnaby, BC V5H 3H6; (604) 435-4123.
Material for the agenda must reach Peter Brouwer, Stated Clerk, by Jan. 20 (#12, 7955-122nd St., Surrey, BC V3W 4T4). By way of exception material can be sent by fax at tel./fax no. (604) 594-4025.
Mr. Brouwer reminds delegates and churches that classis may properly only deal with materials included in the agenda, unless an exception is made, or unless they send their material directly to every council in the classis in time to be dealt with before the meeting of classis.

Personal

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Miscellaneous

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Contact:
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210 Clarke St. N.
Woodstock, ON N4S 7M7
Phone: (519) 539-2117

Job Opportunities

Superintendent

The Edmonton Society for Christian Education is taking a bold step into the future.

We are seeking a visionary and dedicated **Superintendent** to provide direction, development and management for our society and our 900 K-12 students and staff in three schools. The successful applicant will help us to translate our reformational education vision into an increasingly effective Christ-centred school system for students, teachers, principals and supporting community, commencing **August 1996.**

We expect applicants to be eligible for an Alberta Teaching Certificate. The salary will be commensurate with qualifications and experience.

Please send resumes and a brief statement of your philosophy of Christian Education before **Feb. 16, 1996**, to:

Dr. Alyce Oosterhuis, President
Edmonton Society for Christian Education
13470 Fort Road
Edmonton, AB T5A 1C5

PRINCIPAL

Lacombe Chr. School, Lacombe, Alta., is accepting applications for the position of **Principal** for the **1996/97** school year.
Lacombe Chr. School is a school of 340 students serving grades K-9. The school is located in the town of Lacombe, located midway between Edmonton and Calgary.
The Lacombe Chr. School is looking for an educational leader who is a committed Christian and who has the experience, vision and skills necessary to lead our staff and school.
Please send resume, statement of education philosophy and other pertinent information prior to **January 31, 1996**, to:

Mr. John Piers, Principal
Lacombe Chr. School, 5206-58 Street, Lacombe, AB T4L 1G9
Phone: (403) 782-6531; Fax: (403) 782-5760

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"Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

Events

Miscellaneous

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For more information and/or a detailed position description, please call or send resume to:

"Search Committee," The Bible League
P.O. Box 5037
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8
Tel.: (905) 319-9500 Fax: (905) 319-0484

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(403) 465-3500 FAX (403) 465-3534
E-mail: jrheberg@kingsU.ab.ca

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Westminster House is operated by HRC Care Society, an arm of Hope Reformed Church of Vancouver.

Classifieds

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Events

Congratulations
Carolyn Stronks-Zeyl

on your successful completion
of a Master of Music degree in Flute Performance
from the University of Toronto.
May God continue to bless you in your future endeavours.
Love Will, Junior
and your whole family.

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

Jan. 24 The King's University College and the ICS (Alberta Chapter) present Dr. Calvin Seerveld who will speak on "Philosophical Aesthetics at Home with the Lord, an Untimely Valedictory," 8 p.m., TKUC Performance Hall, **Edmonton**, Alta. The lecture will be followed by a piano recital by Dr. Joachim Segger and a coffee social. Info.: (403) 465-3500.

Jan. 24-25 The King's University College Ninth Interdisciplinary Conference. Theme: "The Halo of Human Imagination." Speaker: Dr. Calvin Seerveld with breakout sessions with TKUC faculty. **Jan. 24**: keynote address at 2:30 p.m. **Jan. 25** performance of "The Greatest Song" at 9:30 a.m. Conference is open to community and is free of charge. Info.: (403) 465-3500.

Jan. 26 "King's View Friday" at the TKUC, **Edmonton**, Alta. Call (403) 465-3500 or toll free 1-800-661-8582.

Jan. 28 Dutch worship service led by Rev. Riemer Praamsma, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont.

Feb. 7 The 1996 annual "Church and the Law" seminar, 8:45 a.m. - 3:45 p.m., Queensway Cathedral, 1536 The Queensway, **Etobicoke** (Toronto), Ont. For registrations call (519) 669-5137 or fax (519) 669-3291.

Feb. 9-10 The 1996 "Serving Christ in the Nineties" conference, Canterbury Hills, **Ancaster**, Ont. Panelists: Aren Geisterfer, Ron Kuipers, Mary Vandervennen, Sylvia Keesmaat, Lorraine Land, Roseanne Sweetman and Jack Couperus. Keynote speaker: Don Postema on "Leaving space for God."
Info./registration Will Lammers (905) 945-6380.

Feb. 25 The Mississauga Choral Society presents "A Song of David," a programme based on Psalm texts, with Bach's motet *"Lobet den Herrn," Handel's "Dixit Dominus," and Derek Holman's "A Song to David." At 3 p.m., St. Dominic's Church (Cawthra & Atwater), Mississauga, Ont. Info.: (905) 278-7059.*

March 1-3 "Reformed Engaged Encounter" weekend, Notre Dame Centre, **Waterdown**, Ont. Info./registration: (905) 957-4505. (#)

March 29-31 "Reformed Marriage Encounter" weekend, **Peterborough**, Ont. Info./registration (905) 386-6523. (#)

Reformed

REFORMED ENGAGED ENCOUNTER

A wedding is a day...
A marriage is a lifetime!

An opportunity for couples contemplating engagement or Christian marriage to look openly and honestly at their commitment to one another.

Date: March 1-3, 1996
Location: Notre Dame, Waterdown, Ont.

To obtain brochure or to register, please call:
Jason and Brenda Boks
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News

Retiring banker is volunteer *extraordinaire*

Robert VanderVennen

SCARBOROUGH, Ont. — He has worked 43 years for the Bank of Nova Scotia, rising to assistant general manager at the home office. But what's extraordinary about George Van Dyk is the vast extent of his volunteer work for the church and Christ's kingdom.

Van Dyk immigrated to Canada in 1950 as a 14-year-old and worked in a greenhouse near Hamilton, Ont., while he went to night school.

At age 22 he went to his first Christian school society meeting and was promptly elected to the board of Calvin Christian School in Hamilton. He served three years and became the board's secretary.

A career as a volunteer

At age 16 he joined the young people's society at church and served in its Niagara League. There George met Gerda, his future wife, and with others they worked on hosting, in Hamilton, the first convention in Canada of the Young Calvinist Federation. They were married in 1957.

In 1960 the bank transferred Van Dyk to Toronto and the young family moved to Scarborough. There Van Dyk again served on the Christian school board and became a church elder. He has filled such positions on and off ever since.

From 1965-70 the bank transferred George to the Netherlands. But there too, George was elected elder — in a new church just outside Rotterdam.

A 'safe person'

Over the years, Van Dyk has also been involved in fundraising or in other financial matters for Toronto District Christian High School, for Holland Christian Homes (Brampton, Ont.) and for Christian Stewardship Services. He is also called on to audit and examine the books of churches and Christian agencies.

People speak of Van Dyk's pastoral gifts as a patient listener, a peacemaker, a "safe person." He is always there, and rarely says No.

At the bank George has been captain of United Way and Red Cross financial appeals in his division. He is modestly proud of his record in blood donations — 238 times! In 43 years he has missed only one day for illness — and on that day the bank was robbed!

"He has a great capacity for work," says Gerda, but she adds that when their five children were growing up, George always spent an hour after supper with them before going off to meetings, and he kept Saturdays and Sundays for his family. He passed up some promotions at the bank because the work would have interfered with his family and church life.

Gerda has been no slouch, either, in voluntary activities. For 20 years she has served the Auxiliary of Toronto District Christian High School in fundraising, does countless behind-the-scenes jobs at the church, and in her quiet way has regularly visited elderly shut-ins, church members or not.

ROBERT VANDERVENNEN

George and Gerda Van Dyk continue volunteering in retirement

Van Dyk retired on Nov. 1, but only officially, it seems. He is back at his old job three days a week, but now supervising the work of those who have taken over his job. That can continue as long as he and the bank wish it to. The pace has lightened somewhat. Yet it's doubtful that Van Dyk will say No to volunteer work any more than he has in the past.

Somalia inquiry commissioners visit Petawawa

Stephen VanHelden

PETAWAWA, Ont. — The three-person commission looking into the Canadian Forces' conduct in Somalia met with former members of the disbanded Canadian Airborne Regiment on Dec. 6 at Canadian Forces Base Petawawa (Ont.).

The commissioners explained their role in the inquiry and encouraged soldiers to come forward with any information regarding their peacekeeping-mission duties. That mission quickly became a disaster and saw a Somalian teen beaten and tortured to death.

In an in-camera session, 350 soldiers jammed into the base theatre.

Soldiers refused to comment after the meeting, although one muttered, "It was a waste of time."

At a news conference after the session, national and local media were given a chance to question the commissioners.

"On the whole, [the inquiry] has been very positive," said commission chair Justice Gilles Letourneau.

Peter Desbarats, dean of the journalism graduate school at the University of Western Ontario, and Ontario Court of Justice Judge Robert Rutherford, are the other commission members. Desbarats said he was somewhat skeptical about the exercise when he started out. "Maybe because of my own background I felt there would be a risk that it would be perceived as a public relations gesture and that it wouldn't have real substance," he said.

Desbarats thought soldiers might not be willing to ask questions while officers were in attendance. "That hasn't been the case. [They] are asking a lot of questions."

Desbarats noted the response from soldiers was excellent when the commission set up in Valcartier, Quebec. "We had over 30 soldiers who came to see us. It surprised and delighted me because they are really talking to us," he said.

Letourneau said beyond the Somalia issue they are looking at fundamental issues relating to the functioning of the military as it relates to the training, leadership and the chain of command. "Any soldier, even if he wasn't in Somalia, who would like to see something done, we have invited them to come forward," Letourneau explained.

No axes to grind

He says none of the commissioners have an axe to grind. "I came because I care for the institution. I immediately put the emphasis on the structural problems, administrative and operational problems that were connected with the issue."

Letourneau noted he hopes soldiers will continue to come forward and contribute, but says it might take some time. "A flower doesn't grow faster because you pull on it, it takes time," he said.

The cost of the Somalian Inquiry is about $8 million, said Letourneau. "If we achieve what we want to achieve, it's worth it."

STEPHEN VANHELDEN

Somalia inquiry commission members: Peter Desbarats (l.), Justice Gilles Letourneau and Justice Robert Rutherford.

News Digest

Britons giving up boarding schools

LONDON — Breaking with centuries of tradition, British parents are increasingly turning away from elite boarding schools to educate their children, reports *The Christian Science Monitor.*

"Social attitudes are changing, with both middle- and upper-class families questioning the boarding system and beginning to take a critical look," writes Wendy Sloane in the Jan. 5-11 *Monitor.* In the last five years boarding has declined 20 per cent in private (or what the British call "public") schools, which are attended by just seven per cent of British school children.

Marcus Warren, an Etonian who is now the father of a one-year-old son, is typical of the new attitude. Sloane quotes Warren as saying, "I don't think attending Eton did me any harm at all, but I would prefer to watch my son growing up at home rather than at a distance. I even have doubts about sending him away at age 13."

Boarding schools such as Harrow in West London are relying more and more on elite foreign students. Since 1981 there has also been an annual government program which pays, wholly or partially, for some 30,000 bright but "socially disadvantaged children" to attend such schools.

Critics say this funding should be going to educate the majority who attend state schools, writes Sloane, but Prime Minister Major intends to double the program in phases, at a cost of 100 million annually.

Thinkbit

"An intellectual is someone who takes more words than necessary to tell more than he knows."

Anonymous